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THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.

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THE  
DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.

BY  
PERCY GREG,

AUTHOR OF "INTERLEAVES."

" Knowledge comes but Wisdom lingers ; and I linger on the shore,  
And the Individual withers, and the World is more and more.

Knowledge comes but Wisdom lingers ; and he bears a laden breast  
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest."

TENNYSON's *Locksley Hall*.

VOL. II.

THIRD EDITION

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## CONTENTS OF VOL. II.



CHAP.	PAGE
XI. STATISTICS OF SEX . . . . .	I
XII. "MALTHUS WITHSTANDING" . . . . .	33
XIII. TRUTH IN COMMON THINGS . . . . .	87
XIV. BEHIND THE VEIL . . . . .	100
XV. PHYSICAL PROOF AND PSYCHICAL EXPERIENCE . . . . .	136
XVI. VERE'S SERMON—THE FIRST EASTER . . . . .	161
XVII. DESIGN IN DEVELOPMENT . . . . .	214
XVIII. THE HAND ON THE HELM . . . . .	256
XIX. LIFE WITHOUT GOD . . . . .	295



# THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### *STATISTICS OF SEX.*

"I AM a little surprised," said Gerard, "by what seems to me an inconsistency in your views. Of all men I know you have most thoroughly the courage of your opinions; and do not hesitate at conclusions which would stagger thinkers calling themselves advanced, when such conclusions rest logically on what you think indisputable premises. But if your arguments are correct, they seem to me to indicate polygamy not merely as a probable consequence of female emancipation but as the natural remedy for that excess in the number of women from which you apprehend their practical enslavement. You have always said that for ordinary men and women celibacy is an unnatural and injurious condition. Statistics certainly bear you out in this view, seeing that the mortality among the unmarried, especially in our own sex, exceeds considerably, at almost every age after the usual period of marriage, that of married people. Yet you seem to regard polygamy not as a practical remedy for a



very perceptible evil, but as a bugbear to frighten both men and women from the direction which the progress of thought and legislation has recently taken."

"You hardly treat my argument fairly," said Cleveland. "I did not trouble myself to consider in that argument whether polygamy were in fact good or evil. I *used* it as what you call a bugbear to the advocates of woman's rights, because it is more antagonistic to their feelings and views than even to those of the rest of their sex. They have of course a special repugnance to a system which must place women in an invidious and visible subordination to men, however obviously and directly it follows from their proposals. But as matter of fact the existing order of society rests on two principal pillars—property and the family. Strike away either of these, and the present edifice comes to the ground with a crash. There are, I know, some people who would not be restrained by any fear of practical consequences from carrying out to the test of results any destructive theory that fascinated their imagination or laid hold of their logical faculties. But I have no sort of sympathy and very little tolerance for theories purely negative in speculation and anarchical if reduced to practice. It seems to me an absolutely sufficient answer to any argument not merely abstract, but applied to the actual world of men and women, that it would undermine or overthrow the existing fabric of human civilized society; unless it can at the same time show how and on what foundation a new, better, and at least equally stable edifice can be constructed. That is, if not my sole, yet my principal objection to polygamy."

"But," said Gerard, "there are still existing and have been in all ages societies, often very powerful, founded on or admitting of polygamy; and even granting that these are greatly inferior to our Aryan civilized communities (and if this be so now, they were highly civilized when we were semi-barbarous), I do not see that polygamy has much to do with their inferiority. The strongest form of the family, the one bound together by the closest, firmest and most permanent ties, is of the patriarchal type; and to that type polygamy is, if not essential, yet certainly natural. Abraham is a fair, whether a real or fictitious, representative of that patriarchal organization out of which the older civilized empires probably grew; and Abraham, like all Eastern chiefs from his day to the present, was a polygamist."

"In a certain sense, yes," said Cleveland. "The wife was in the patriarchal household evidently an important personage; and therefore, even if we had no other proof of the fact, we must assume that there was a wide distinction between the wife and the concubine."

"You forget the household of Jacob," answered Gerard, "and I fancy the household of Jacob more resembles the ordinary patriarchal type than that of Abraham."

"You may be right," answered Cleveland, "though I doubt whether a female head of the inner household be not almost as necessary to that type as a despotic male chief of the family, immediately directing its outdoor action in peace and war, and ultimately of course supreme over all its members. But it is worth noting

that in history the strongest States have generally been monogamic. I mean that the monogamic States have in the end proved proportionately stronger, and have overthrown and survived those in which polygamy was a habit. This may be, and probably is, due rather to coincidence than to causal connection. It was not because the Greeks and Romans were monogamists that they defeated and finally absorbed under their dominion, political or intellectual, the polygamic States of the East. It was because monogamy has been from the earliest ages, whether in the stricter or laxer form, the practice of the stronger and better-organized races; especially of that Aryan race which, on the whole, has always surpassed its rivals in vitality and in force. But the very fact that a practice so unpleasant to the ruder man, and involving so strong a restraint on the desires of the law-making ruling sex, has prevailed so long and so generally among the highest race of mankind and is found in nearly all its separate families, is a very strong argument in favour of that practice—tends to show that it alone harmonizes with the clearest, simplest, most permanent interests, and with the soundest political if not personal instincts of the higher species of humanity.”

“Are you quite right,” inquired Gerard, “in saying that monogamy is so distinctive and general a practice of the Aryan race? The ruling castes of India are, or were for a very long period, of Aryan blood; yet polygamy has been since the dawn of history their established habit. The Persians also were surely Aryans and polygamists. In the Homeric family the

concubine is almost as strongly-rooted an institution as the wife. The later Greeks appear to have been legally monogamists; but when they sought anything like intellectual companionship or true and equal affection among women, they sought it in the society of hetærae; and, as you know, the deepest and most passionate love that finds frequent expression in later Greek poetry is of a kind more utterly incompatible with all domestic affection and conjugal respect between the sexes than the worst forms of polygamy."

"True," said Cleveland. "There must have been something utterly unsatisfactory to human instincts in the domestic relations when Socratic philosophy and Ionic poetry could be so deeply tainted by the same vice; and when that vice could serve the former as an illustration of the highest moral relations. Probably the Greek women, except in Sparta, were so wanting in the few moral and many intellectual merits which redeemed for one or two centuries the character of the men that the personal attachment which alone can render strict monogamy permanently tolerable was impossible. But as regards the Eastern Aryans it is easy to see how through the first tolerated infraction of monogamy, Homeric concubinage, polygamy grew up. Under any but the highest and most recent civilization war is frequent and involves the slavery of all captives not slaughtered. With all their pride in their common Hellenic ancestry, the Greeks enslaved one another; and Kallikratidas seems to have been the only Hellen who was sincerely ashamed of the practice. Female slaves, not belonging to a visibly distinct and inferior race like the negroes, are pretty

sure to become concubines. But concubinage is rather a relaxation of monogamy than a form of polygamy. In the earlier days of Gothic and Germanic Christianity the chiefs insisted on their right to concubines if not to extra wives; but monogamy has always been the rule in European households, and concubinage an exceptional license, generally though not always dependent on slavery. There has always been one wife with a recognized position, and her children have had the first if not the sole right of succession and inheritance. The introduction of polygamy proper among the Aryan conquerors of India I should be inclined, in the absence of historic evidence, to ascribe to similar causes. Probably the invaders, like many conquering races, had few women with them; and, taking women of the conquered tribes, did not respect them enough to make them wives in the old monogamic sense. The privilege of true wifehood might naturally seem the exclusive right of Aryan women. As to Persia, I cannot tell. The same cause may possibly have operated there. Or perhaps—if the institution of caste, forbidding if not from the first yet for many ages intermarriage between the Aryan priests and warriors and non-Aryan peasants and artisans, be thought to render the former suggestion improbable—the manners of the enormous majority of the races around and beneath them may have gradually infected the few Aryan conquerors. The ready acceptance of concubinage by Semitic and in some cases by Aryan women may be traceable to the existence or surviving tradition of that desire for numerous male offspring which must always prevail when, as under the oldest patriarchal system,

families are separate and self-dependent, and when consequently every male child born to the chief is an addition to the permanent and certain strength of the clan. Again, the earliest empires were non-Aryan. At a time when as yet no Aryan family seems to have emerged from barbarism the Assyrian and Egyptian empires had become great, refined, and rich. There was no morality sufficiently strict to restrain chiefs and princes from doing much as they pleased with their own; and polygamy once introduced into the household of the king and into those of his highest nobles would gradually spread downward. It can hardly have been the rule among the populace, because neither the means of the peasant nor the comparative numbers of the sexes would permit it to become general. Again, constant war as waged by Assyria and often by Egypt must have introduced a double tendency to polygamy. First, as I have remarked and as is obvious to every one, female captives became concubines. But again widows and orphans were probably, even in the most civilized condition of these empires, very helpless. Unless restrained by superstitious customs as stringent as those of the Brahmin code, the widow would marry again, were it only for protection. Now constant war might—probably did—cut off in the flower of their age so large a proportion of the male population—especially of the free fighting men, who formed in all likelihood a primitive sort of aristocracy—as seriously to disturb the proportion of the sexes and make polygamy a necessity to women in days when permanent celibacy was not a possible or recognized status in any case but that of vestal priestesses,

generally few in number. Hence we find, in so far as we can trace the facts, that polygamy takes a much larger development in Semitic empires than among the patriarchs. There is no longer the distinction between wife and concubine, and princes have not two or three but scores of wives. In certain conditions, again, the interest of the nation would impose polygamy at least upon the king. I do not feel able to express a confident judgment on Mr. Frôude's excuse for Henry VIII.; but am inclined to believe it, if not false, monstrously exaggerated. Nevertheless, the whole history of the time shows how deep was the impression produced on the English mind by the dynastic War of the Roses. The people evidently felt that the birth of a legitimate and direct male heir to the throne was of paramount importance to the country; and if no such feeling entered largely into the motives of Henry VIII., it is obvious that under other but similar circumstances a nation might easily learn to regard polygamy in the Royal House as a national necessity; though in the long run it proved the source of those very civil wars and dynastic feuds which it was perhaps in the first instance meant to avert by insuring as far as possible the existence of several children of the reigning prince, and so promising to prevent at once the failure of the dynasty and the rebellion of collateral heirs. For many a king would distrust any heir but his own son. He would therefore be anxious to insure that no single accident, such as the barrenness of the wife, or the removal by disease or accident of her one or two sons, should leave him with no other heir than an ambitious brother or cousin who might snatch at

any opportunity to hasten his own accession. We can thus see a variety of causes which might gradually introduce polygamy among races originally monogamic, as the Aryan race certainly seems to have been. McClennan, and other writers on prehistoric antiquity, have shown that the practice of female infanticide among tribes utterly improvident for the morrow, which only felt that every child not capable of becoming a warrior was for the time and would never add to their immediate strength, led to polyandry; an institution obviously most antipathetic to human instincts. The causes I have enumerated might equally account for the introduction of polygamy among civilized or semi-civilized peoples."

"Why," inquired Dalway, "do you speak of polyandry as so antipathetic to human instincts? Is it any more so than polygamy?"

"Certainly!" returned Cleveland. "You have polyandry among the lowest classes of animals, fish and insects, but never among the higher. The birds are, with many exceptions, generally monogamic. But the higher animals are as a rule polygamists, and those most nearly related to mankind appear generally to adopt a sort of patriarchal system. Among mammalian animals living in freedom and not unsocial, the general organization is clearly patriarchal. One supreme male by right almost always of superior strength assembles round him a herd of females and young whom he rules despotically, and whom he will allow no other adult male to approach. The Darwinian theory, then, which derives Man from the higher animals, is absolutely fatal to the idea that monogamy—much less polyandry



—could be a natural deeply-rooted instinct of the half-developed aboriginal man. That imperfectly-metamorphosed ape was in all likelihood a polygamist, certainly ready to become such. Polyandry I believe in spite of M'Clennan to have been a rare and exceptional phenomenon confined to the lowest or most famine-pressed of savages. The surviving usages—apparently much exaggerated—that indicate a former practice of capturing wives may surely be sufficiently accounted for by the prevalence of war and the universal custom of making concubines or wives of female prisoners. We may observe, moreover, that among patriarchally organized races, as soon as the natural objections to consanguineous marriage were recognized, wives could only have been obtained by capture or purchase since all the free members of a single clan must have been closely related. It seems then far more likely that the great majority of existing races descend from patriarchal polygamists and have developed their organization out of patriarchal institutions, than that they descended from a primeval ancestry, including most of the then existing human stocks, among whom a custom so unnatural as polyandry, and owing its existence to so artificial and exceptional a practice as that of female infanticide, must be supposed on M'Clennan's theory to have extensively if not universally prevailed."

"Well then," said Gerard, "you seem to hold that monogamy is at best no instinct of man but a conviction produced by experience which among the highest of human races has in the lapse of ages developed not indeed into an instinct properly so called, but into an

innate idea of race, with so powerful a hold on the Aryan mind that nearly all Aryan political and religious systems soon adopted it."

"Yes," answered Cleveland. "That is though a very vague a tolerably correct statement of my impression; and you may note that the Aryan races have actually contrived to import monogamy into a Semitic religion which did not originally enforce it. There is no question whatever that the Mosaic legislation accepted polygamy as it accepted slavery, as one of those essential principles of human society which it never dreamed of contradicting, though it might here and there regulate or restrain their application. Consequently, though polygamy had become comparatively rare, perhaps altogether exceptional, among the Jews in the reign of Augustus, yet it was traditionally recognized as a legitimate institution. Therefore, had it appeared to Christ that such a relation was essentially immoral, He would certainly have forbidden it—not, as some ingenious commentators and the Church at large allege Him to have forbidden it, by vague implication, but clearly and positively. Since, though He is alleged to have uttered some definite precepts about marriage and its duties, He never alluded to polygamy, it seems if not certain yet by far the more probable belief that He regarded it as a legitimate form of marriage. None of the texts commonly quoted on the subject at all resemble the language of a religious teacher who intended to forbid the cohabitation of one man with many women as inherently sinful. Yet at a very early period the Aryan races which embraced Christianity imposed on

it, imported into it, their own monogamic theory; just as in the present century Protestants have imported into it their very recently-developed hatred of slavery. The Master never said a word against either the one or the other; and Paul distinctly recognized slavery not only as a permissible arrangement but as one binding on the slave, since he sent a bondsman back to his master. How little Christ had to do with modern Christianity is not more clearly shown by doctrines regarding His own person which would have seemed to Him the most horrible blasphemy, than by the manner in which Christian Churches and missionaries from the days of St. Olaf to the present have insisted, as the primary condition of admittance to the Church, that their converts should dismiss, often to starvation or adultery, all wives but one; whereas their Master, never said one word upon the subject, and, so far as we can draw legitimate inferences from what He did say, He would have indignantly repudiated so cruel a wrong, so outrageous an affront to the kindest instincts of unregenerate human nature."

"I have not studied Theology at all," said Gerard, "and am ashamed to say that, while your interpretation of the New Testament doctrine startles me as something utterly new, I cannot recall a single text that seems definitely or directly to contradict it."

"Surely," said Dalway, "it is contradicted, if not in so many words yet in principle, by the fact that our Lord applies His rebukes of adultery to both sexes alike. Now if it be adultery in the wife to admit a second partner, it must be, on Christian principles, equally adulterous in the husband."

"Possibly on Christian principles," said Cleveland: "certainly not on those of Christ. It is the ignorance and presumption of mediæval churchmen and their modern pupils and imitators that has perverted Christ's teaching on this subject. He never attempted to define the meaning of adultery. But the confusion you share as to the sense of that word is due to the fact that His teachings are recorded in Greek, and that the Greek language has no word technically answering to ours. Adultery means properly and solely the infidelity of a wife or the violation of a husband's rights by the partner of her sin. No man can commit adultery with an unmarried woman."

"Like Gerard," said Dalway, "I am no theologian; but I think I remember two texts that conflict with your view."

"I remember them well," said Cleveland. "The first in Greek runs thus:—'He who looketh after a woman to lust after her hath in his heart debauched her.' The second, 'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone,' might without straining the language so much as your interpretation strains it, be taken to mean 'he who has not sinned in one way or another.' What I presume it did mean was 'he who has not yielded to the same class of temptation.' Certainly we have no right to force upon it the meaning 'he who is not an adulterer.' Had it been so understood, the bystanders could hardly have been convicted so unanimously by their own hearts: for there must have been among them many who, whatever their sins, were innocent of that invasion of a neighbour's domestic rights which alone they

would have recognized as constituting the crime in question. The woman, observe, was condemned to death by the law of Moses. That law did not condemn a polygamist; it did not so condemn a profligate. It condemned to death only those who violated a husband's right. Therefore it is clear that only those Jews who had actually violated that right would have considered themselves as falling under the same condemnation with the woman in question. It has always seemed to me that, beautiful as the story is, the thoroughly Aryan idea it involves—the idea of a reciprocal duty of exclusive fidelity between the sexes—shows that it came from the Church and not from her Founder; and confirms the doubts of its authenticity elicited by purely critical reasons, and by its absence from certain manuscripts.”

“Well then,” observed Gerard, “if polygamy be not antichristian or unnatural; if it be not forbidden either by revelation or by that instinctive morality which is binding on all men—because it was either implanted by their Creator or is an essential part of their better nature and indispensable to its support and development—your arguments against it seem to me very feeble. Monogamy in the present state of society is the cause of infinite misery to women. It condemns hundreds of thousands to unnatural celibacy, and thousands to a life of such degradation as only women can reach—*corruptio optimi pessima*—when they have forfeited the peculiar honour and purity of womanhood.

‘For men at most differ as Heaven and Earth,  
But women, worst and best, as Heaven and Hell.’

There are, as we all know, in this country far more women than men; and this fact alone would seem to indicate polygamy as the proper and only natural remedy."

"Take care," said Cleveland. "You may strain that argument very much too far. The major part of the mere numerical excess of women, perhaps in most old countries, certainly where emigration prevails, and especially in England, is unnatural. It is chiefly due to that emigration, and to disorganized emigration. If we sent to Australia, Canada, and the newer States of America the women who are deficient there, the numerical excess here would not much exceed 8 or 10 per cent."

"As you said," said Gerard, "that a permanent excess of 5 per cent. would 'bring down the price indefinitely, it would suffice to justify my doubts as to the natural remedy. To apply your own argument, a very small extra supply where the demand does not increase in proportion to cheapness sends down the price of an article most seriously; and an overplus of women though it only amount to 8 per cent. may suffice to place the whole sex at a serious disadvantage; if only by keeping down wages, and keeping up that social evil which aggravates again to an enormous extent all the difficulties and hardships that fall on the sex by enabling so large a number of men to dispense with marriage, while making no sacrifice of natural desires. But putting all this aside, your 8 per cent. are not properly provided for even when you have given them the means of earning their bread comfortably and without overwork. We agree

that celibacy is to women especially an unnatural and unwholesome state. Ought we not then to give these 8 per cent. the opportunity of marriage? yet only polygamy can do that."

"But," said Dalway, "in making one woman out of twelve as happy as she could be in a harem you sacrifice the higher happiness of the other eleven. In order that one woman may not be celibate, you turn eleven wives into concubines and slaves."

"I should," said Gerard, very slowly and sadly, "I should give more weight to that argument if marriage were in most cases what it is in a very few; a real permanent profound union of hearts as well as of lives and fortunes. But not one marriage in twenty is or ever will be such. Therefore I think that in all probability the abhorrence of Aryan women for polygamy is mere matter of habit and education; and that the sacrifice involved in the abandonment of monogamy is rather imaginary than real. Looking at the matter logically, as one of pure calculation and reasoning, and setting aside our habits of thought and our personal feelings, I am inclined to think that the abolition of the great social evil and full provision for the excess of women would be worth the sacrifice of anything which women in general owe to our monogamic laws. You must remember that, whatever theory may have to say, the numerical excess of women does not measure their redundancy. In practice from one cause or another one-fourth of our women under the monogamic law never marry at all; and so long as there remains an excess of women from whatever cause unmarried, sufficient to feed the class of *filles perdues*, so long, though

you should export to the colonies all the women wanting there, would you still have, say, one in four educated ladies, and one in six of all ranks condemned to lifelong celibacy. This fact alone seems to me to indicate, on the low ground we have taken, that polygamy is the only sufficient corrective, providing as it would homes for all our women."

"You forget," said Cleveland, "a pointed and most telling criticism on 'the greatest happiness principle' of the Benthamite system—or rather on the ordinary method of applying it—indicating a condition that always should be and never is remembered when that principle is appealed to by utilitarians or democrats. You must consider 'not only the greatest number but the greatest happiness;' not only the extent but the degree. Now the happiness of the few marriages you admit to be happy may be in intensity sufficient to outweigh the trivial advantages that you think might arise in a million cases from giving women now celibate by compulsion the opportunity of marriages of convenience. Granting that the advantages of polygamy would justify the sacrifice of whatever benefit accrues to women from this sort of monogamic marriage—and even this I cannot admit—the sacrifice of that true happiness which exists in a few homes and serves as a standard for all would be a terrible price to pay for the gain, estimate it as highly as you will, of finding women at present celibate a place in polygamic harems."

"True," said Gerard, "and no one can feel that more deeply than I do. But that happiness when it does or can exist will never be put in peril by any law



that the State can make, as it owes nothing to any law and needs no protection from any power outside itself. No one proposes that men should be *forced* to take more wives than one; and in none of the few homes of which we are thinking would the desire or dream of polygamy ever intrude. The question, then, lies simply between the present state of society outside these homes,—that is, between a score of houses filled with quarrel and vexation where the men would be thankful to get rid of their partners (but for the restraint imposed on their acts by law or opinion and on their thoughts by the habit of ages), with five unmarried women for each dozen of such homes—and the inclusion in each dozen of two harems which would absorb the superfluous and now celibate women. Moreover, it is just possible that polygamy might have a healthy effect on women in general, if your estimate of their present character be at all a fair one. Clearly, wherever there were two wives, each would have constant and urgent motive to do her best to please her husband, if only from jealousy of her rival; and the possibility of polygamy would bind over the first wives, while they remained without rivals, in very heavy penalties to keep the peace with their tongues and to abstain from all the faults you impute to them. I am therefore a little surprised to find that your usual consistency does not carry you far enough to approve of a system apparently sanctioned by nature in her provision of an excess of women, and certainly calculated to put down those aspirations to or assertions of equality, and those habits of petulance and extravagance for

which justly or unjustly you have so sharply censured the women of the present generation."

"I grant," answered Cleveland, "that polygamy would serve as a rod wherewith to correct most of those faults; but the rod is, in the first place, too heavy to satisfy my conscience. No man of even temper wishes *scutica dignam horribili sectare flagello*; and it is only on a few clamorous and pushing platform Mænads, to whom a more than masculine notoriety is not repulsive but agreeable, that I could bear to use the scourge you propose to put into the hands of our sex. Next—even did I not make much allowance for all feminine errors on account of the nervous susceptibility and intellectual weakness of the sex—even if I thought that they had deserved, whether in polygamy or in such total abolition of marriage as would follow from the concession of sexual equality, the punishment some of them are trying to draw upon themselves—I should object to polygamy in the interest not only of future generations, not only of the women, but of the living generation of men themselves. Abolitionists have often said that slavery is more injurious to the master than to the slave. I doubt it, for the finest races of the world were till very lately slave-owners. But to live constantly and chiefly in the society of slaves, to have intimate domestic relations with slaves and with slaves alone, to have no intercourse with equals or quasi-equals at all approaching in frequency or confidence to that held with slaves, would suffice I think to ruin the best qualities even of superior men. To the character of the average man such conditions would certainly be fatal. Now polygamy makes the women of the harem virtually mere

slaves, and the worst kind of slaves—slaves of the master's passions and caprices, not of his rational interests; slaves who will never be kept under steady equal discipline, but petted to-day and punished to-morrow with very little regard to their merits in either case. I should not myself object to be a slave-owner, in charge of men and women of an inferior race, born to and fitted for strict subordination to those whom the Creator has made visibly and vastly their superiors. I hold that all authority, limited or absolute, public or domestic, is a trust which the owner is bound to use not for his own gratification but for the benefit of those he has to govern; and this deep conviction would I hope protect me from all temptation to abuse such power. But—while women are intellectually inferior, and morally as well as mentally and bodily weaker than men, and need guidance and control—they are not so widely, so palpably and *unquestionably* inferior to men of the same race that they should be treated like negroes. Unless they themselves felt and admitted their inferiority as instinctively as negroes naturally do, they would be disaffected and rebellious slaves: and nothing could be more unpleasant to the higher manly spirit or more injurious to character than to be the master of reluctant, disloyal, recalcitrant slaves. Nor could I without grave doubt and much reluctance consent to reduce to slavery any class of persons actually free, even though I thought their freedom a mistake. Above all, I decline to give to a slave that kind of hold upon my affection, that kind of influence on my conduct, which even a concubine who has won her owner's regard, liking or mere instinctive attachment, necessarily

possesses. And, finally, I decline to have my children educated in the first years of their life by slaves. I decline to have my sons associated intimately, for the first ten years of their existence, with sisters who, as they would soon learn, are destined to be the mere toys and play-things of their male acquaintance and play-fellows."

"Now," said Dalway, "I am almost as much puzzled as Gerard by your inconsistency. It is not long since I heard you insist as energetically as any Arab patriarch, Roman patrician, or savage chief could have done on the subordination of women; and now you denounce polygamy, because it would enforce that subordination effectually, with almost as much of indignant eloquence as Mrs. Woodhull herself could exert on so congenial a topic."

"If," said Cleveland, "you cannot understand the difference between subordination and slavery, you deserve to pass half-a-dozen years as a bondsman on a Cuban plantation, and another half-dozen as a subaltern in an English regiment. The slave practically exists for the sake of his master. The chief exists for the sake of his subordinates, or both for the welfare of the community to which they both belong. The women of the seraglio exist simply for the gratification of their master's passions; and deeper degradation is hardly possible to human nature. Subordination involves no loss of personal dignity, no matter how absolute the obedience required. The great radical mistake, lying at the root of half the declamation of strong-minded women about the wrongs of their sex, consists in this very confusion. ~~When they are told that wives should~~

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obey, they cry out that wives are in that case slaves. I say in reply that if a wife obeys like a slave she does not, even in the matter of obedience, perform half her duty. She should obey not as a slave, with unwilling or indolent hands and feet, but with heart and intelligence. She should carry out her husband's wishes as a conscientious and loyal officer carries out those of his Colonel or General, even when he sees that those orders are sending him to death, and firmly believes that they will involve the defeat of the army. If, despite his own convictions and wishes, such an officer do not use the utmost power of his faculties to carry out those orders as intelligently and energetically as if they were of his own devising, he merits degradation if not death. Again, much more than an officer and utterly unlike a slave, the wife, if she deserve it and is fit for it, is sure to be her husband's counsellor. Unless one or the other be a fool, about everything in which she has to act, to obey otherwise than passively, she is sure to have been consulted. If not, it is generally because she cannot express a difference of opinion becomingly. It is her duty therefore sometimes to render an obedience much more difficult than that of a slave; the obedience of one whose wishes and opinions on the subject have been heard and overruled. It is from intelligent loyal and intimate subordinates, not from slaves, that we can expect such conscientious, active support. Finally, a subordinate is on the whole personally and socially on familiar and more or less equal terms: a slave is or is supposed to be essentially necessarily incurably inferior, unfit to be an associate, incapable of being a friend. The Colonel and the

subaltern meet at the mess-table as equals ; the master and the slave can never do so. When therefore it is proposed to degrade women by the institution of polygamy, those who insist most distinctly on conjugal subordination are precisely those who in consistency are bound to object most strongly to the innovation which, by turning English helpmates into Eastern 'favourites,' gives us the passive physical submission of a slave in exchange for what should be the willing co-operation of the wife ; a co-operation even more close and loyal than the intelligent obedience of a subaltern officer to his chief or a Minister to his Sovereign."

"It seems to me," said Gerard, "that you make a double mistake in that argument, keenly as it appeals to feelings I do not care to recall. You take monogamy at its very best, such as it is in one home out of five hundred. You take polygamy at its worst, such as it is in the harem of a Sultan or a sensual and wealthy Pacha, where the master scarcely knows all his concubines by sight and certainly knows nothing of the personal character of each ; where he can, save by a rare accident, have no sympathy or confidence for any. You ought in fairness to compare average Aryan monogamic homes with those in which Semitic or Turanian husbands have two or three wives, with all of whom they are in daily familiar intercourse of mind and heart, and who are really companions and not slaves. Practically, as you know, not one English wife in hundreds is now-a-days the loyal, willing, obedient minister you describe. Even in days when the marriage vow of obedience was regarded as a reality,

formally recognized and openly accepted, and when a wife would have been almost as much ashamed of public and formal disobedience as of avowed unchastity, there was little of that loyal subordinate co-operation which you have put forward as the type of the monogamic relation. Women, as educated and treated hitherto, are as a rule too irritable, too petulant, too blind to the logical and practical consequences of their conduct, to be capable of that steady faithful energetic execution of plans they disapprove, the example of which you correctly seek in the ranks of disciplined armies. If educated as free equal independent beings, they will of course refuse such submission. If they are to be kept in that subordination which you recommend and I repudiate, it must be (in the enormous majority of cases) by treatment and by appealing to motives which would really render them slaves. Now, if they are to be slaves, Oriental polygamy has the advantage in this essential respect that, the slavery being obvious and almost avowed, the slaves are *not* rebellious. To a husband holding and acting on your view at the present day nine English wives in ten would be, even if submissive, certainly resentful and reluctant subordinates. Now where resentment and rebellion come in—where the slave would break away from the yoke if he could—there you have yourself declared that slavery is thoroughly bad for both parties. But you take your type of conjugal subordination from a few exceptional cases; as you take your examples of slavery, I doubt not, from the equally exceptional instances of domestic and hereditary servitude. If you are to justify slavery not as it exists

in semi-patriarchal households, but as it existed or still exists under Aryan rule, you must take as your standard the gang of plantation slaves—half of whom are purchased, and neither care for nor perhaps know their master. If you wish to make a fair comparison between polygamy and monogamy you must take—not the theoretical perfection of wifehood as against the worst abuses of the seraglio but—the ordinary European home with its contentions and contradictions, as compared with the Arab tent or the home of an ordinary Indian or Turkish gentleman of moderate means. Unfortunately we know very little of these last. But all that has been said and written about the practical evils of polygamy is true of—is avowedly drawn from—the great seraglios alone. If you want a parallel for these in monogamy, take in common justice the worst class of monogamic homes. Take those of the French idle classes, where it would seem, if the best French novels give a true picture of Parisian life, that scarce one wife in five is faithful; or the homes of the more brutal of English labourers and artisans, where subordination or slavery is enforced by the poker—more frequently used, I believe, and certainly a worse instrument of rule, than the Turkish pipe-stick—and where murder is more frequent than there is any reason to suppose it even in the largest and therefore the worst class of Oriental seraglios. Lady Duff-Gordon is one of the very few English writers who has seen anything of the interior of ordinary Oriental life. Her testimony shows that among the middle and lower classes polygamy chiefly operates as a compensation for that excess in number



of women on which alone I suppose a reasonable man would base an argument in its favour. The men take a second wife very generally because she has to be provided for in some way and because marriage is the best and simplest way of meeting the necessity. If you insist that women ought not to be to a large extent bread-winners and independent of men, you must assume that every third English household should contain permanently two women to one man. Among the richer classes the proportion would as you know be larger, since the number of celibate women among them is far greater than twenty-five per cent. When once this comes, should it ever come, to be a common rule, your arguments in favour of monogamy, and all arguments derived from considerations of domestic peace, fall to the ground. If we are to see generally two or more adult women in a family I suspect that family life would go on more smoothly and peacefully if all were wives."

"There is something new, and perhaps something true," answered Cleveland, "in that view of the subject. I must admit of course that the existing state of English society, with its twenty-five per cent. of celibate women among the population generally, and probably forty per cent. among the educated classes, is thoroughly wrong. If monogamy is to be retained and justified as the only arrangement compatible with the higher civilization, this state of things must come to an end. You are entitled then, as the Devil's Advocate in this argument, to claim that I as a defender of monogamy should show how we are to provide for these women without retaining either

prostitution or extensive out-of-door and therefore unsuitable employment of women, or probably both. I must grant that polygamy does provide for them. The most obvious alternative is of course that they should be maintained by and in the homes of near married relations. If this be the only or the most likely method of providing for them you may possibly be right in saying that the best form for a family consisting of one man and several women is that in which the women are all wives."

"At any rate," said Dalway, "I think most men of experience will admit that English wives would be almost as jealous of unmarried women permanently settled in their homes as of rival wives."

"You were right," said Gerard, "in calling me the Devil's Advocate in this discussion. Of course I have no especial belief in the merits of polygamy—probably as little as you—though having seen more of Islam I like it better and do not recognize the force of your strongest argument against its 'peculiar institution.' I am no believer in the inherent superiority of race over race, and I think your own remark [that the earliest empires were not Aryan but Semitic or Hamitic] refutes the importance you would attach to Aryan instincts as those of a race essentially and not accidentally superior—the culminating type of humanity. What I do consider thoroughly wrong and illegitimate is the pretension of society or the law to dictate to men and women the terms on which they shall live together. Whether you be right or wrong in holding that such dictation is exercised chiefly in the interest of women, or again in the theory that it

necessarily involves their subordination as a condition of permanent union, I do not care to inquire. Unlike some advocates of Woman's Rights not more earnest than myself, I care equally for the liberties of either sex, and I insist that both should be permitted to associate on such terms as they mutually please, legal provision once made for the children. If polygamy be as you think a necessary or probable consequence of liberty, I am prepared to accept even polygamy; and I suppose that if the numbers of the sexes are permanently unequal, some form of polygamy is an almost inevitable consequence of the withdrawal of compulsion. But when you say that polygamy would enslave women you forget that I would give women perfect legal equality with men, and absolute freedom of divorce."

"No," said Cleveland. "I did not forget that: but I do not think it has any serious bearing on the position of women when once the protection given by law and custom to monogamy is withdrawn. The weaker sex would soon find out that they must submit or starve. Liberty of divorce would be at best merely the power of changing masters at will; and few women well advised would care to exercise such a power, since their first owner for obvious reasons would probably be kinder on the whole than any other. No doubt this power of change would put some check on gross physical cruelty to young and attractive women; but with this limitation I think that polygamy would be the same in character and effect, whatever the legal rights and status of women."

"Do you not," said Dalway, "overlook another

point? At present the large proportion of unmarried women is a very useful check on the increase of population; and the practical limit which nature seems to have set on the fertility of women is almost the one thing that renders marriage safe or prudent for any but men of fortune or mere labourers. If in practice every mother bore as many children as theoretically she might do, and as the creatures nearest in rank to men appear to do—that is to say, one child in each eighteen months from the age of twenty to that of forty-five—all men possessed of but limited means and anxious that their children should not sink below their own rank, would be deterred from marrying at any rate till late in life. Now polygamy would abolish both the limit practically imposed by nature on the average family, and that which the celibacy of so great a proportion of our women places on the too rapid increase of the population at large. Would not even rich men be staggered at the thought of having to maintain not only six wives but, say, thirty children?"

"I think," said Cleveland, "though with some doubt, that the six wives certainly, and the thirty children probably might in the end cost less than the present much smaller family, because polygamy would degrade the position of women in their husbands' eyes so much that they would not be half so liberally treated as at present. I suspect that, plurality of wives being possible, it would be one of the favourite indulgences of rich men, to which they would divert the greater part of that which they now lay out on the lighter forms of intellectual pleasure or mere amusement, or expend in gratifying a wife or daughter's love of

elegance and ease. Do not fancy for a moment that the harem would be furnished like the drawing-room; or even that the children of a dozen concubines would be clothed, educated, and provided for like those of a single wife."

"As to the increase of population," said Gerard, "I believe that it is on the whole slower in polygamic than in monogamic countries." 1140 \

"Yes," said Cleveland, "but this tells doubly against polygamy. The reason probably is, first that, the polygamic races being less civilized, the checks called by Malthus positive—war, misery, disease, nursery mismanagement—operate thrice as powerfully as among the higher monogamic races. Secondly, there is less care and interest in children on the part of the mothers; and they are I suspect the victims not unfrequently of absolute foul play."

"I doubt it," said Gerard. "I fancy our burial clubs are the cause of far more havoc among children than the jealousies of the seraglio; and all I have seen and read of Eastern peoples contradicts your supposition. They seem generally to be quite as careful of their children as we are, and more gentle and forbearing with them."

"But," rejoined Cleveland, "does not your experience and that of other travellers refer chiefly to those lower-class homes in which polygamy is the exception, and in which when practised it takes the least odious form? Men have no access to the interior of Oriental homes; and the very few women who have—excepting Lady Duff-Gordon—write such utter nonsense, and are so blinded by their prejudices or self-conceit, that their

testimony, were it tenfold fuller than it is, would have but little value."

"There is, however," said Gerard, "another point in favour of polygamy, or rather another way of regarding the question, which should not be left out of account. If we grant that the seraglio is a thoroughly vicious institution, it is, after all, far less vicious than its European counterpart. Where, the sexes being unequal in number, you forbid polygamy, you have what is called by an emphatic and very truthful euphemism the social evil. Set these two against each other, and the balance, I think, is in favour of polygamy. The majority of homes under whatever rule, monogamic or otherwise, are of much the same character, though my experience leads me to fancy that those of Asiatic polygamic races are on the whole happier than those of Europeans. Is it not worth while to solve the problem of the redundancy of women, with all its evils, at the price of giving every rich man a harem; seeing that practically, polygamy—except in providing for the numerical excess of women—scarcely affects the lives of the many."

"Unfortunately," answered Cleveland, "in most Oriental countries the rich are the only aristocracy, and their influence must tell greatly on the habits and ideas of the people. If polygamy demoralizes the households whose masters are the natural chiefs of a nation, it cannot but demoralize through them the nation as a whole."

"As a fact," replied Gerard, "the Oriental nations are not demoralized. They were three thousand years ago civilized, when the Aryan monogamists were univer-

sally savages. They retain to this day not a few of the simple manly virtues which do not flourish so generally in the hothouse atmosphere of a higher civilization."

"You have not touched," observed Dalway, "the physiological argument on which, according to certain sympathetic French reporters, the Mormon champions of polygamy lay so much stress."

"No," said Cleveland, "it is not an argument on which anything could ever turn. The practical evidence in its favour is drawn from animal rather than from human experience, and in such matters human and animal instincts differ vitally. Again, we know and the Mormons admit that their theory is no more consistent with womanly than with masculine feeling: and until practical proof of actual mischief from the existing and immemorial habits of mankind is forthcoming, it is hardly worth while to inquire whether, on abstract grounds, a change in those habits be desirable. . . . Assuredly, were polygamy legalized, not one polygamist in a hundred would *act* on the view in question, *i.e.*, would choose to take extra wives merely or chiefly to satisfy the requirements of a physiological doctrine so questionable; and were he, when married to several wives, to carry out that doctrine, nothing he could do would give rise to more bitter jealousy or more natural resentment. The wife, especially in polygamic families, regards childbirth as giving her a new and special claim on her husband's regard; and the claim evidently falls in with the man's own sense of the fitness of things. . . .

## CHAPTER XII.

## "MALTHUS WITHSTANDING."

HERE the discussion came to a pause, and then, lighting another cigar, Dalway spoke. "Neither of you," he said, "seems to care to deal with the effect of polygamy—not as actually practised in the East but as it might be practised in England—upon population. And surely, since the proportion of population to wealth is the paramount influence regulating the happiness or at least the material wellbeing of a country, this is a point that ought not to be left out of consideration in balancing the account."

"If," answered Cleveland, "we are to enter upon the question of population, it is to be hoped that the ladies will take longer in brushing their hair, or whatever *causerie* included under that phrase may answer to our *Tabaks-Parlement*, than I ever knew Ida do before. In that case I will give you a cigar I do not often produce here, because it takes at least an hour to finish one, and they are too good to be thrown away."

"I never go to bed early," said Gerard. "You two know best how many hours, at this time of night, you dare give to a discussion which, unless prematurely cut short, might well occupy us during a session as long as that memorable two-days' continuous sitting



by which the House of Commons accepted the challenge and daunted the courage of the Irish obstructives. But I should like to see my way a little more clearly through the mazes of that most perplexing problem. I am inclined to believe on the whole that polygamy would not very seriously affect the population. The great majority of men marry as early as they can, and could not afford to marry two wives. The classes now restrained from marriage by prudence would be still more effectively restrained from polygamy. A few rich men alone would have families very much larger than at present, and I fancy that the comparative simplicity of life which polygamy would be likely to induce—by destroying many of the motives which now lead to expenditure on luxury, social entertainment, and ostentation—would release resources more than sufficient to maintain the extra numbers.”

“Remember,” answered Cleveland, “that your extra number of children must be measured by the extra number of women who are to be married. After providing for the Colonies there would remain unmarried, in the present state of English society, something like one-fifth of the whole number of marriageable women. Your one telling effective plea in favour of polygamy is that it would provide for these. If, then, your argument in its favour be true, polygamy would involve an addition of some twenty per cent. to the annual number of births without increasing the proportion of infant deaths to births.”

“I am not quite sure of that,” said Gerard. “For some reason or other, certain it is that polygamic families are not numerous in proportion to the number of

wives. This may be no doubt partly due to the positive—I should call them destructive—checks we have all along borne in mind. But I incline to think that it is due, at least in part, to a comparative paucity of births; for which, were we to go closely into the details of the subject, it might not be difficult to account. I doubt whether the increase of births to be expected from the absorption in polygamic homes of twenty per cent. of our women at present unmarried would amount to more than say twelve per cent., and this in a population increasing so fast as that of England would not produce a very serious result.”

“Would it not?” said Cleveland. “The teachers on whose authority you rely much more than I do regard the increase of population with such terror that any addition to it in those European countries where population increases fastest in proportion to the extent of the soil, should seem to them and to their disciples a very grave matter indeed.”

“It is just because the increase is so rapid,” rejoined Gerard, “that I do not regard with alarm the possibility of a slight addition to the rate. Englishmen multiply so fast that vigorous measures are even now necessary, and must year after year be more essential, to prevent a plethora which would choke all the channels whereby the increase is healthfully absorbed, and a fuller subsistence than can be obtained in any other old country secured to our working classes. The drains by which the actual excess of population is carried off are so effective that wages steadily rise, indicating that for the moment at least wealth increases more rapidly than numbers. The energy and enterprise which keep our

capital up and our numbers down would suffice to meet just as completely the case of an additional percentage of twelve or twenty on the annual number of births."

"I thought," said Dalway, "that on this question you agreed, at all events in the main, with Stuart Mill?"

"Certainly," said Gerard. "On this as on most other topics, excepting some of his strictures on democracy, I am proud to have been the disciple of the finest intellect of his age. But you misapprehend my meaning. The increase of population in England is so tremendous a power or burden, call it what you will, that a small addition to it is of little moment. The channels by which it is for the present carried off into new or wider fields of employment are numerous and ample as so vast a growth requires, and would suffice for the disposal of any addition that polygamy could make. Should those channels be choked, the pressure at actual rates would at once become so tremendous, so overwhelming that such addition to it would again be of little consequence. Unless effectually met, it would overwhelm all our resources, and crush all barriers of law or force erected to protect them. It is precisely because that the problem is in itself so gigantic, the danger so grave, the force so irresistible, that any question of a little more or less seems trivial."

"But you admit," said Dalway, "that our population is not growing faster than our wealth? Emigration and the demand for English labour abroad do not prevent our population from increasing very rapidly at home; and yet that increasing population is constantly employed at higher wages. Moreover those wages are not only higher as estimated in gold, but pos-

sess on the whole a greater purchasing power than the mere nominal increase represents."

"Granted," returned Gerard. "But the enormous increase of our national wealth during the last half century is abnormal, almost miraculous; and the *rate* of progress due to the rapid extension of steam-power can hardly be sustained when all the principal developments whereof that force is capable have been brought to bear wherever applicable. In this we shared the gain common to all the civilized world, but ran ahead of our rivals by many years—during which of course our profits were utterly exceptional. Then again our coal and iron mines were so much better situate, better developed, more available, that as against Europe we had for some time a virtual monopoly of these; the essential material, the nutriment and instrument, of this novel all-revolutionizing motive-power. We could afford to 'launch out;' and unhappily, with the Many, the extraordinary benefits of Fortune or Providence were as usual expended in an increase of population which consumed not merely the income but the capital, so to speak, of the new productive power bestowed. So long as invention went on developing our resources faster than our population, wages as you say rose. But even in 1846-7 the Irish famine, caused by the failure of a single crop in one densely-peopled island, warned us what overpopulation might mean; and for some time past we have been forced to feel that meaning, if we do not yet understand it. We have lived for a decennium in large part upon the enormous nominal profit of foreign loans and investments; profit which we regarded as permanent income, but which was in fact

a part of the lent capital returned as interest or commission. The capital all expended the income came to an end, the borrowers having developed no new resources: we were thrown back upon our legitimate or *real* business; and at once we find that this is no longer sufficient to occupy or to sustain the vast permanent increase of population which prosperity has saddled on the soil and capital of the country. In brief, when railways were invented, and the power of the steam-engine in manufacture fully developed, we were placed in a position of vantage as compared with all competitors, which gave to our productive and distributive trade an impulse the like whereof has never been seen in the history of the world. At the same time we gained an immense start on all other countries in the acceptance of free trade. We have therefore for some thirty or forty years enjoyed opportunities of getting rich with extraordinary rapidity, such as never occurred to a people before and are very unlikely to occur again, at least in an old land whose resources have been fully explored and ascertained. This stupendous unparalleled multiplication of our wealth cannot possibly continue. It is I greatly fear committing suicide by exhausting the more accessible and cheaper stores of those minerals on which it depends. As sounder views of commercial policy pervade Europe, Continental countries will become formidable competitors. If they do not take from us any part of our present trade they will at least prevent its increase. As America becomes more fully peopled and abandons the suicidal policy of protection—after it has done its work for her by fostering her helpless infant manufactures—she

will gradually reach and outstrip us. The country east of the Mississippi alone possesses mineral resources infinitely greater than our own. These are as yet only touched or almost untouched because the attractions of a virgin soil and a favouring climate offered to agriculture advantages far greater than any that could attach to manufacturing on an extensive scale; and a true instinct, approved by all sound economists, spread the population over the surface of the land instead of concentrating it on mineral accumulations or factories erected in their vicinity. The rate at which our wealth long increased and still longer appeared to increase was therefore altogether unnatural and artificial, or, if you prefer the phrase, accidental and in its essence temporary. You may say that the multiplication of our numbers is equally abnormal and unprecedented. It has been stimulated and rendered possible by the extraordinary increase of our wealth. But if or when the rate of our enrichment, as I fear is now the case, is checked, and settles down to a normal and permanently maintainable average, the multiplication of our numbers will not similarly slacken. No form of expenditure is harder to control than the rate of human multiplication. The last thing that a people or a numerous class will consent to sacrifice is the privilege of marriage at the age and on the conditions to which they have been accustomed. A time must therefore come before very long, and might come at any moment, when the growth of our population will actually fulfil the Malthusian law, and outstrip the growth of our wealth; or rather when the latter will fall behind the former. Then the problem will become one of the most formidable with which political

philosophy or practical statesmanship has ever attempted to grapple. On the efficacy of the solution attempted will depend certainly the greatness and the national unity of England, possibly her very existence as a civilized community; for the people will not quietly consent to a gradual persistent decline in their comforts or style of living. Still less will they meet the evil for themselves by a prompt and rigorous restriction of their numbers, or at any rate by general abstinence from or postponement of marriage. We shall then have reached a point at which England can do no more than support her existing population, or at most a moderate increase thereof, such as we see in other European lands; while the actual increase of numbers will proceed at a rate almost American. History shows those who can read between the lines how tremendous is the social and even martial force which numbers outgrowing means have generated. It has swept away great empires; it has hurled vast hordes of men upon certain and visible destruction. Half the great wars of old are known, many more may well be thought, to have been produced by the mere impulse of famine or fear of famine, driving the wild races of the mountain and the forest down upon the civilized States of the open plain. Hence, no doubt, the successive waves of Aryan conquest that swept over Europe and India, and covered them with layer on layer of a superior race-element, as the Nile covers Egypt with repeated layers of fertilizing mud. Hence the Gallic inroads into Italy, age after age, from the first settlement of the Boii under the Alps to the final annihilation of the Cimbri and Teutones by Caius Marius. Hence the invasion of agricultural Europe by Tartar nomads.

Hence the puzzling succession of Southward movements in Africa; each hungry tribe sweeping away its next neighbour, and these again driving out the dwellers immediately south of their abandoned home: movements so unconcerted, yet so regular in their direction and result that they might seem to indicate the action of a social instinct like that of the swallow. This social motive power, like that of a lake long dammed up by an Alpine glacier, is almost superhuman in its destructive capacity. And unless the difficulty is perceived in time and met by effectual precautions—unless means are found of reconciling the then established rate of increase among our population with the maintenance by some means or other of the existing standard of comfort among the Many—that irresistible human earthquake or lava-tide, the pressure of population upon resources, will sweep away every barrier that law and morality have erected for the protection of private property; and that with a force, suddenness, and violence which will render the reconstruction of society on another basis impossible, or possible only after convulsions that will leave but scanty relics of all the wealth, knowledge, and refinement accumulated in the course of some 1800 years.”

“That,” said Dalway, “is a view I should have expected from Cleveland rather than from you. It agrees with some speculations he unfolded to us the other evening, but does not agree at all with that faith in the future of mankind you have always seemed to entertain.”

“I have no fears for the future of mankind,” replied Gerard. “There is no present possibility that the numbers of mankind at large should press closely on



the resources of the habitable earth. Before they can do so the human race will, I think, be much wiser and more far-sighted than it is at present. But the future of the human race and the future of any one country are two very different things; nay, the future of this isle of England may be utterly different from the future of the English nationality. I do not, however, seriously fear that England will come to grief in the manner of which I have spoken. I merely said that she would be in grievous danger *if*, when the recent rapid growth of her wealth shall be permanently checked, she shall not have made betimes wise and ample provision to prevent any signal and general falling-off in the well-being of her people. But I believe that such provision will be made. We see already where the practical remedy lies. As an imperial nation we possess, and may long continue to possess, areas of fertile soil practically illimitable, as yet almost untouched, capable of maintaining the utmost possible increase of our population for centuries to come; and all that we should need in the worst probable case would be a public provision for emigration on a very large scale."

"But," said Dalway, "you spoke of a possible check or choking of the channels by which our surplus population is at present carried off. Do you, then, anticipate any possible, even if not probable, check to emigration?"

"Yes," answered Gerard, "there is such a potential check. I do not think that it will come into operation indeed, I regard such an occurrence as extremely improbable. But you are aware that the United States owing chiefly to misgovernment, to the abuse of the rights of private property by great joint-stock companies

manipulated in the interests of a few dishonest men, and through a difficulty of diffusion which in such a country is hardly intelligible, have more than once found their population locally and temporarily redundant. Should this happen when the proletariat of the cities have become, as they perhaps will become, the ruling power, or snatch as a third party the momentary control of the States, it is quite possible that immigration might for a time at least be forbidden. Our own colonists in Australia are more ignorant and less reasonable on this point than the Americans have ever in practice shown themselves; and have already forgotten that their land by every title of law and justice belongs not to the few who have settled themselves there first but to the Empire at large; and we have heard among their working-classes talk of prohibitory legislation against the introduction even of English immigrants. Such ideas might take a practical and very dangerous shape if colonial wages were lowered by an extensive officially organized emigration from the mother country at the expense of the State. I hope that in such a case England would assert her right and compel the colonies to admit the equal interest of all their countrymen in the lands not yet appropriated by individuals, and in the resources of a new and thinly-peopled country. But at some future moment, when colonial population and colonial capital may be more nearly equalized than at present, such an attempt to restrain immigration is not inconceivable. I do not, however, think it sufficiently probable to be worth more than a passing notice in a discussion on the general question of population."

"But," said Dalway, "what of the countries that have no colonies, and whose people are, and probably will be for some generations to come, much less willing to emigrate than our own? Must not they be in danger of that tremendous convulsion which would, you say, befall England if emigration ceased to be practicable?"

"Not necessarily though not improbably," said Gerard. "England is the principal country which combines the density of population characteristic of an ancient community with the rapidity of multiplication proper to a young one. Nevertheless all the peoples nearest akin to our own show that the pressure of population on resources is felt, by the number of the emigrants they send forth, chiefly to the United States. Next to the Irish, Germany supplies the most important foreign element in their mixed population; and Scandinavian colonies are numerous and increasing in the North-West. Another class of facts indicate the same tendency. The countries whose wealth has not increased like our own have multiplied their population at a very slow rate, and in many of them war, misgovernment, bad sanitary conditions have applied tillately with very great effect the positive checks of Malthus. In others the government has, by legislation expressly directed to that purpose, applied a quasi-preventive check: forbidding marriage until the couple can show their power to maintain a family. In the Scandinavian kingdoms social usage seems to have had a similar effect, since it is not customary for a young man to marry until a house is vacated by the death of its last occupant. Outside of the cities there are com-

monly but a fixed number of houses answering to the fixed number of *employés* on each farm, and only when one of these falls vacant is a new marriage practically possible. It is not true then that the question of population is for individual States a remote one; so remote that even the present generation can afford to disregard it. It is not an urgent question in England; but it might at any moment quickly if not suddenly become so. It is not of course, as I have said, an urgent question for mankind at large; but as regards the Latin races and a great part of Europe it is already a question of pressing and paramount importance; and must continue to keep alive the dangers and alarms generated by intestine feuds until room shall be made for a multiplied number of hands and mouths by emigration or by a discovery of new or a fresh and large development of existing resources—in one word, an increase of productive power on a greater scale than any of which as yet I can discern any sure symptoms. The arguments, then, of Mr. Mill and Mr. Malthus are not—as some modern sociologists have maintained—merely theoretical, and likely to demand actual and practical consideration only at a date indefinitely distant. I cannot agree that it is useless for the present generation to anticipate the discussion of the problem, because, as these thinkers urge, we cannot possibly guess what new forces, social, industrial, or physiological, may by that time have come into play. The various hopes of reconciliation between prudence and instinct suggested by speculators who cannot believe in a direct conflict between distinct natural laws operating in different departments of action—or philosophers whose negation of a spiritual heaven

inherit their inferior brain-development and superior prolificity: so that, at least in so far as hereditary influences operate, each generation would tend to be more prolific and less intellectual than its predecessors. And I doubt the alleged correlation between brain-force and sterility. The families of the educated classes are as large—in proportion to the age of marriage among their women—as those of the uneducated. *A priori* no doubt we must admit that no part of the human frame can absorb an increased proportion of the vital energies or material nutriment of the whole save at the expense of other parts; and, again, that there exist relations of a very peculiar character between intellectual and reproductive force. It would seem that these rival powers severally make a call on the same limited store of special vital forces or physical nutriment, and that in proportion as the one absorbs more the other must be content with less; that in fact the over-development or over-indulgence of either can only take place at the expense of the other. But still, considering primarily that *à priori* aspect of the matter on which Mr. Spencer and his disciples rely, I see no reason to think that larger or more active brains need imply lessened tendency to multiplication. Still less am I satisfied that such would be the effect of hereditary culture and gradual mental development. Probably with improved organization or increased development of the nervous system would come an increased power of assimilating the special nutriment required; and it seems at any rate not unlikely that a human variety superior at once in intellect and *physique* to the highest existing

families might even surpass them in its rate of multiplication. Turning to facts, we find that that exceptional sterility of exceptionally intellectual natures on which Mr. Spencer and his disciples lay stress is peculiar, at least in the male sex, to abnormal mental and probably physical constitutions. Women with masculine brain-power are no doubt exceptionally barren; but this fact will never exercise much influence on the rate of human multiplication, for such women will rarely be sought as wives; and in my belief they will always be moral monstrosities, and as rare as other monsters. As a rule I believe that able men, especially men of strong and sound intellectual and bodily conformation, do and always will have families of full average number; and that the same is the case, and will always be the case, with intelligent women whose brains have not, either before birth or during education, been developed at serious expense to their general health."

"Then," said Dalway, "to what possible or probable changes do you look for any future relief from the pressure of those Malthusian laws of population whose theoretical truth and actual influence on life you seem to confess?"

"I have expressly said," returned Cleveland, "that speculation in regard to a distant future is useless, because we cannot even guess what the changed conditions of the problem may be. But even my very limited theoretical knowledge of chemistry agriculture and mechanics would enable me, if necessary, to suggest half a score of conceivable inventions which would enable a given soil to sustain a largely increased

population without any proportionate increase of labour. Suppose, for example, a discovery which should enable the farmer to obtain at will abundant supplies of ammonia from the hydrogen of atmospheric vapour and the nitrogen of the air. This would multiply indefinitely the productive power of all soils, and especially of the less fertile. Again, electric science is in its infancy; but we know that electricity has much to do with the growth and form of plants. Suppose that in a century hence men should learn how to direct the forces which control vegetable growth as they now direct and command those of steam and chemical affinity. Here again we might achieve an almost indefinite power of multiplying the production of food on a given area. I say then that it is needless to consider the problem of human multiplication in its ultimate aspect. For aught we know, every condition of the problem may be changed long before mankind at large can possibly be even as closely crowded as the population of Spain or Massachusetts, to say nothing of England, Belgium or Lombardy. And for the present pressure on particular classes and countries emigration affords a remedy, not indeed painless, but absolutely sufficient. There is, therefore, no excuse for those who would inculcate a resort to measures certainly unnatural and perilous, and, in my belief, vicious degrading and demoralizing."

"It seems to me," said Dalway, "that Spencer's theory receives a certain kind of confirmation or probability from the fact that peerages, especially those conferred for intellectual services in recent generations, are so apt to expire for want of heirs.

Can you assign any other cause for this than either natural sterility due to hereditary culture, or the alleged tendency of a luxurious life to produce the same effect, as domestication is known to do with many tameable beasts?"

"Certainly I can," said Cleveland. "Have you forgotten Macaulay's remarks on this point in his reply to Sadler? Peerages, in the first place, descend only to male heirs, so that in every case where the family of the first peer, however numerous, consists of daughters the title necessarily expires or lapses. Again, peerages descend only to legitimate heirs, and there are reasons why junior members of noble families should abstain from legal marriage. Taken as a class the latter probably leave fewer legitimate children than the average. The peerage, then, is apt to depend on the direct lineage exclusively; and probably there are few families in which the succession of eldest sons or of direct male heirs is uninterrupted for many generations. Again, peers, and peers' sons, eldest and youngest alike, are apt to marry heiresses, and heiresses are *ex vi termini* sterile. They would not as a rule inherit the fortune of their parents were they not only children, and they are only children because as a rule there is a tendency on one or both sides of their ancestry which they of course are likely to inherit. The successors of peers ennobled for recent public services are especially likely to marry heiresses, because they seldom inherit a fortune suitable to their rank. These considerations taken altogether sufficiently explain that exceptional sterility of the peerage to which you refer without supposing it in any degree



ascribable to intellectual, moral, or physical influences."

"But," said Dalway, "there certainly exists some strong physiological check on population, seeing that not one family in fifty reaches its possible—which I suppose we must consider its natural—number. Except man, every animal as a rule produces, accidents excepted, offspring at every proper interval during the period of breeding. If this were true of mankind most women would have from twelve to twenty children, whereas we know that the average number is under five."

"Of course," replied Cleveland, "there is some check to that extreme arithmetically possible multiplication whereof you speak. Probably few women have vitality enough for such a strain. But the multiplication regarded by economists as alarming, the rate contemplated by the Malthusian theory, is not the theoretically possible but the practically usual rate; usual, that is, in the absence of checks positive or preventive. If everybody married and every marriage produced an average of four children, the increase of population would be rapid enough to bear out fully the calculations of Malthus."

"Still," said Dalway, "the fact that women as a rule have only one-fourth or one-fifth of the number of children which would *à priori* have been expected, indicates the existence of some signal distinction in reproductive power between man and animals. One hears of large families in colonies and among savage tribes, though in the latter case the number is kept down by infant mortality below the civilized average. Is it not probable that the operative cause to which the com-

parative sterility of human kind is due must be sought in the enormously disproportionate development of the brain and intellectual powers as compared with those of animals ? ”

“It is possible, of course,” said Cleveland ; “and if we could make out that savages had more children than civilized peoples, or that the number of births to a marriage was greater—proportionately to the age at which women are married—in the poorer than in the higher classes of our own society, this would be strong presumptive evidence in favour of Spencer’s view. But till these points are cleared up I cannot, even apart from Gerard’s well-taken physical objection, see any distinct evidence on that side of the question ; and at any rate I see no reason to think that within the course of the next thousand years the human brain will be so largely developed as greatly to impair human reproductiveness. It seems tolerably clear that no such increased development has taken place within the last twenty-five centuries.”

Here the conversation came to an end, and after a few minutes the party broke up earlier than Cleveland had expected ; though as we retired he remarked that the discussion had been left altogether incomplete and unsettled. It was resumed the next day during an afternoon walk in which we were joined by Vere.

“You have laid much stress,” Gerard said to Cleveland, “on the demoralizing influence of some parts of Mill’s counsel, if not of the Malthusian theory. Does it not strike you that selfishness is at the root of early marriages and rapid multiplication, and that self-restraint implies a denial of our own appetites and feel-

ings for the benefit of our species which it is eminently desirable to encourage?"

"No," replied Cleveland. "That view may be theoretically sound enough, and may be practically true in exceptional cases. But as a rule the motives which lead men to postpone marriage or limit the number of their children are quite as egotistical as those which prompt them to marry early and burden themselves with a numerous family. The selfishness of old bachelors, the frivolity of old maids, are proverbial; and though the latter charge is applicable I think only to a minority—perhaps because women remain unmarried by the will of others rather than their own—there can be little doubt that prolonged celibacy, in our sex at least, tends to selfishness and does not always spring out of true self-denial."

"I think," interposed Vere, "that you put the case a little too harshly and too strongly. I believe that not a few of those men who abstain from marriage are really actuated, at least in the first instance, by consideration for their possible children. I am sure that many are actuated by care for those they would wish to make their wives. I have constantly seen men draw back, give up pleasant society and make considerable sacrifices of personal feeling, rather than run the risk of drawing down women who have taken their fancy into social disadvantage or actual poverty. I cannot say, however, that I admire or approve this prudence save in the extremest class of cases. I grant that men have no right to bring into the world children whom they cannot hope to feed, and therefore must not marry till they can maintain a family. Probably they

are right in holding that they should not run the risk of giving birth to children whose inherited sensitiveness and refinement will be shocked by the poverty they would have to endure and to whom life would not be on the whole enjoyable: and, again, that it is cruel to take advantage of a girl's uncalculating eager affection to involve her in troubles and impose upon her sacrifices and toils for which her character and education unfit her, and for which, after a few years, love will not compensate. But as a rule both lovers and parents are apt to carry this prudence much too far. If the cautious bachelor has fair right to expect that he will be able to maintain wife and children in tolerable comfort, it is no true kindness in him to abstain from marriage; it is false prudence in parents to discourage it because the girl will have to forego most of the luxuries of her parental home. The effect of this prudence is, in perhaps a majority of instances, that the girl never marries, and her life is more completely spoilt than it need have been spoilt by anything short of abject poverty in marriage. The vanity of human nature makes in this respect one of those numerous mistakes to which it is prone. Men now-a-days overrate their own foresight and wisdom and underrate proportionately the value and soundness of the instincts they derive directly from the hand of their Creator. We know very little indeed of the real purposes of earthly life or of the possibilities of that future which we so confidently calculate and forecast. Unless a man's special circumstances are such as to constitute a distinct Providential indication of his duty, he will do best to be guided by those natural impulses and powerful instincts which

his Creator has implanted in the heart ; and which on the whole are safer guides than logical reasonings founded on those exceedingly limited premises which alone our human knowledge permits us to discern. And on the other hand the guidance we derive from revelation contradicts directly the arguments of Malthus and the advice of Mill."

"Certainly," said Cleveland, "most men in postponing marriage think rather of the troubles it might bring on themselves than of those it might possibly entail on their children or even on their wives. One proof that their motives are mainly egotistical is commonly overlooked. Fear of poverty restrains hundreds and thousands from marriage ; but, if they feared poverty for their children's sake rather than their own, they would be doubly careful not to entail on possible offspring evils far worse than poverty in its worst form. Yet how few men conscientiously abstain from marriage lest their offspring should inherit a poisoned constitution ; a danger which as a rule is much more obvious and certain than any arising from present pecuniary pressure ! How few hesitate to marry even when they know that the terrible curse of insanity clings to their family, and that on a reasonable calculation of probabilities one at least of their children will, after years of unhappiness and suffering such as probably sane men can never appreciate, end his existence as a prisoner for life in a lunatic asylum ! How very few scruple to bequeath to another generation, nay to many generations, the physical disease and moral deformity which the vice most common among the youth of the educated classes is apt to entail on their posterity ! I

doubt whether, for a hundred men who refuse to marry because they cannot afford such a home as their tastes demand or their pride would like to give their wives, there be one who conscientiously remains celibate lest his children should inherit scrofula or consumption. Yet, surely, it is much more pardonable to risk bequeathing to another generation the poverty which comes by the visitation of Providence than the disease which we know to be the result of our own or our parents' misconduct. Moreover, the laws of inheritance are so certain and so clear that no man can reasonably say to himself that he trusts to Providence to save his children from the diseases, mental or physical, which he knows to be existent or latent in his own constitution; whereas the possibilities of fortune are so uncertain that the poorest man cannot feel assured that he will not be able when the time comes to feed clothe and educate his children decently, and only the richest can well feel sure that he will be able to do more."

"Ay," said Vere. "Parents have much to answer for, in that they do not as a rule speak much more plainly and frankly to their children on these points. Perhaps five-sixths of our youth marry with no real knowledge of the laws of inheritance; and of the remainder only a minority are truthfully told what diseased tendencies of brain or body are latent in their own constitutions. Family records, painful family reminiscences are kept secret from those who are most deeply concerned to know them. We see sons daily permitted to undertake what from any point of view is a terrible responsibility, in disastrous ignorance or sheer heedlessness, because their fathers shrink from the pain of saying to them

frankly—‘Your uncle was insane; Your aunt committed suicide; Your grandfather bequeathed gout in various forms to nearly all his descendants; and you unhappily inherit from my youthful follies a taint of scrofula, which, though you are yet unaware of it, may probably affect the lives and happiness of your children.’ I have seen one family after another permit its children to marry in ignorance of facts like these, and I have thought that they sinned most grievously. There is the less excuse for them that they are so careful of much less momentous considerations when marriage is in question. They think as a rule much more of the fortune than of the character that a daughter-in-law may bring to her husband. If she herself be fairly good, well educated and well principled, and if her immediate parents have not incurred public disgrace, they seldom look further. They will do their utmost to prevent a son from marrying the daughter of a tradesman without a dowry, while they would congratulate him on his engagement to the daughter of a baronet with ten thousand pounds who brought with her an inheritance of disease, physical or moral, likely to affect her children, and through them to be the misery of her husband.”

“Nay,” said Dalway, “I think that few thoughtful and high-minded parents would willingly see their children marry persons tainted either by physical infirmity or clearly discernible and serious moral faults. I certainly count among my friends more parents who would object to a doubtful character than who would stubbornly refuse to accept a son or daughter-in-law without a penny.”

"Granted," said Cleveland. "I am not thinking of the bride herself but of her family. She may perchance have escaped in her own person alike their diseases and their vices, and yet may be almost certain to give birth to children tainted by both. Our novelists—who are practically the moralists of the age, doing more than preachers or writers to form the ethical standard of our rising generation—have much to answer for in this respect. They represent as an act of generosity and courage what is really a sin against posterity; as a cowardice that which may be the noblest sacrifice to duty. One of their favourite problems is found in the situation of a man engaged to a girl—herself beautiful, healthful, and virtuous,—whose father turns out to be a scoundrel or a felon. If on that ground her lover avoids the marriage, he is represented as at best a mean-spirited craven, frightened of the world's opinion. Yet a conscientious man, familiar with the laws of inheritance, and knowing how seldom children reproduce exactly their parents' character or features, how constantly they resemble grand-parents or collateral relatives, would probably take an exactly opposite view. For my own part, I would rather have married the daughter of a second-rate tradesman who had received no better education than that of a National school, than the child of a peer, whose father was known as a black-leg on the turf or whose mother was a divorcée; and this though the daughter herself had the heart and the form of an angel. Of all reasons that might render the breach of a solemn engagement not merely a right but a duty, the discovery in the parent of an intended wife of vices likely to descend to her children seems to



me the strongest and the most sufficient. The reckless disregard of all these considerations shown in the marriages daily contracted by educated men, seems to me one of the most monstrous moral inconsistencies of the age—an inconsistency even less excusable than that so severely and justly reprobated by some economists and moralists of allowing hereditary paupers or persons deprived of sight or hearing to marry and bring into the world children who in all probability will be incapable of caring for themselves and a source not of profit but of unmitigated and permanent injury to society."

"And yet," said Gerard, "there is certainly another side to the question. You have yourself said, and fully agree with you, that celibacy is a dangerous and an unnatural state. Even where, as in monasteries and nunneries, the celibate is entirely withdrawn—withdrawn for the most part at an early age—from the society of the other sex, from everything that could tempt or excite the instinct he or she is compelled to deny, the injurious effects are clearly and painfully visible. In order that serious scandal may not follow their intercourse with the world, it is necessary to subject the secular priests of the Roman Church to an exceptional training; to separate them in early youth from men intended for the life of the world; and to put them under especial checks and restraints of various kinds in addition to the merely moral obligation imposed by a religion which regards chastity as the highest of human virtues and the most essential of priestly duties. Yet in most Catholic countries—where theological antagonism does not, as in face of a Protestant people, enforce fidelity—sacerdotal unchastity and im-

purity were during the Middle Ages almost proverbial, and in some they are still generally imputed. Yet if perfect chastity in a celibate life can be easy to any, it should be to monks, priests, and nuns. We do not know enough of the inner life of the Shakers to form any clear judgment as to the results of a similar suppression in their exceptional communities; but all we know of all human experience forces us to believe that nothing is rarer or more difficult than absolute purity among unmarried men, and nothing more trying in one way or another to the bodily and mental health of either

Remember what terrific penalties Roman law and tradition affirm to have been necessary to secure the chastity of a few selected Vestals. The demand proves too severe for the endurance of those who are specially trained to it, and incited to fulfil it by the strongest alike of religious moral and even temporal motives. How then can you reasonably ask it from men and women exceptionally weak; or exceptionally deprived of other gratifications? Take the case of those whose constitutions are impaired by the actual or latent taint of insanity or scrofula. The former directly weakens the mental power and control, especially the control of the will and judgment over the passions. The latter acts less directly; but, in poisoning the whole physical system, can hardly fail more or less to impair that force of will, that despotic empire of the conscience over the character and conduct, which is of all human virtues and qualities perhaps the highest, certainly the rarest, the most slowly hardly and seldom developed. Such despotism of the will over the impulses and of the judgment over the will as you would

demand of tainted constitutions, has with extreme difficulty and in the course of countless ages been developed in a few of the highest races; and—to the extent you require—only in the highest and generally in the best-educated specimens of those races. Can you rationally make such a demand on defective natures? Can you—without a severity which if exercised voluntarily involves almost ascetic self-denial, and if imposed from without is rather cruelty than austerity—exact from those whom Providence has already deprived of so much of the ordinary enjoyment of life, (as the blind or the deaf,) a sacrifice found too hard for those of our fellow-creatures who possess every gratification that Nature bestows on man through the senses of sight and hearing? Above all, how can you expect such a sacrifice from that weakest and lowest class in civilized communities which you designate as hereditary paupers?”

“In the last case,” replied Cleveland, “it must evidently, if attained at all, be enforced by law, and I think that society has a clear right to enforce it. I doubt greatly whether the obligation, legal in England and in some American States, to keep alive all those who have actually been born into the world and cannot support themselves, be more than a political expedient;—i.e., whether it be in any sense morally or permanently binding on society. But at any rate such an obligation, whether imposed by morality or voluntarily assumed, carries with it corresponding rights. None of those rights is more obvious, more absolute, more undeniable than the right to limit peremptorily the future number of such unhappy dependants.

Those who must be fed and sheltered at the expense of others have no right whatever to multiply the number of useless mouths and miserable lives, or to increase indefinitely the burden their existence imposes on the community. And, if society have the right to prevent such multiplication, true charity requires that the right shall be exercised. It may be, nay it is, hard on the individual paupers of the present generation; but the suffering they undergo through such restraint is but a fraction of that which their multiplication would entail on the next generation of their own class, and trivial indeed in comparison with the importance of checking human degeneration by constantly cutting off the lowest and most degenerate elements in each civilized community."

"I doubt," said Vere, "whether Our Lord would have listened to such a plea. I have always thought that there was much force in the censure pronounced by a journal whose intellectual subtlety is almost as remarkable as the earnestness of its moral faith upon a somewhat similar but wider proposition. The critic urged that Christian civilization aims at a moral development higher than, and to a certain extent incompatible with, that Darwinian form of development which the criticized economist and those who think with him would propose as an object of aspiration to civilized man. The gentleman to whom that censure was by literary rumour attributed is one of the most thoughtful and original moralists of the age; and his opposition to economic austerity deserves the more respect and attention that he is himself a trained economist and familiar with the general principles of

Darwinian physiology. When such a writer tells us that the law of savage life 'let the strong trample on the weak' has been superseded under the Christian, if you prefer the phrase, the modern form of civilization by a higher law 'let the strong sacrifice themselves for the weak;' if I cannot entirely agree with his conclusions I am bound to admit that his premises appeal to me essentially and clearly Christian. In trying to extirpate the lowest and most helpless portion of society we may, he thinks, demoralize the higher; and purchase physical and intellectual development at the price of a retrogression in nobler and more permanent beneficial elements of human nature as regarded in its modern or Christian aspect."

'I grant,' said Cleveland, "all you have said in honour of the controversialist in question:— •

' I know his heart, I know his hand ;  
Have shared his cheer and proved his brand.'

I have crossed swords with him too often to slight his weapon—to think that his reasonings can be lightly passed over even when his logic is evidently controlled by his feelings—when his intellect and judgment are not the rulers but the instruments of his sympathies. But the question as I put it is not of sacrificing a class to the general advantage of society. I should be content to leave that right entirely aside. I will rest my assertion that suppression of pauper multiplication is a social duty solely on the ultimate interests of the paupers themselves. True charity, Christian as well as secular, must regard (as Gervinus says of democracy) not merely the present but also

and at least equally the future; must consider the greatest happiness of the greatest number not for this generation only but for generations to come. To gratify the instincts and somewhat brighten the lives of two miserable and useless beings, the argument you adopt would bring into life four beings equally useless and miserable. For every pang he spared the existing sufferers, he would inflict tenfold misery on twice their number in the next generation. Therefore on this point if the writer in question would allow his argument to be carried so far—I must, provisionally at least, consider him condemned on his own grounds and by reasons whose force he would admit as fully as myself.”

“But,” said Gerard, “if I grant that you are right in affirming that it is the privilege and the duty of society to repress the multiplication of hereditary paupers—who, since they cannot exist, cannot multiply, save by the permission and help of society; how will you deal with the case of those in whom the taint of inherited disease is latent, or at all events does not interfere with their power of self-support? I hardly think that you would tolerate a law so inquisitorial as would be needed even to check, much more to prevent, their marriage. You cannot insist on a medical certificate of health as a prerequisite; and if you could, you know that to prevent marriage among persons capable of self-support is not to check multiplication but only to promote illicit unions and general immorality.”

“Granted,” returned Cleveland. “I never dreamed (at least since I reached the mental stature of adult manhood) that in the present state of society, or in any state we need contemplate as even remotely possible

paternity—still less maternity—could be made by law the exclusive privilege of the healthy. I may, in you and under the influence of Greek philosophy, have imagined Utopias in which such legal control should be possible. But for obvious reasons Greek philosophy postponed unscrupulously the individual—his liberty, his welfare, even his free personal development—to the safety and strength of the State. The earlier and greater of those philosophers lived in an age when the liberty, the wealth, the personal safety of each citizen depended on the effective military force of the community. The later were removed but by a few generations from an age when neither State nor family could permanently hold the right of existence by any other title than that of physical force. Even under the Macedonian tyranny and the Roman Empire, when Athens was no longer a State, and even the Hellenic name had ceased to command reverence or inspire patriotic pride, philosophy still lay under the spell of traditions inherited from a then recent past; and, beneath the shadow of the Parthenon, could not emancipate itself from ideas native to the mother-city of Socrates and Plato in an age when the smallness of nearly all free communities rendered the relation of the State to the citizen naturally closer, its claims paramount. Hence not only cant and confusion, much unreality of language and affectation of an anachronistic sentiment; but hence also a disposition to attach much undue value to opinion, much wrongful authority to law. Even Epicurus did little to emancipate his followers from the fear of powers which could interrupt their quiet life of pleasure. Christianity, defying Cæsar, demanded submission to the votes of an

ignorant Church. The philosophy of the Porch alone asserted the intrinsic primacy of the individual soul—upheld the dignity of the *Man* against all the pretensions of *men*; and this idea it was that gave to the Stoic, despite all the chimerical extravagances of a creed that contradicted consciousness and outraged common-sense, his immovable vantage-ground of self-respect; extorting from tyrant and populace the highest tribute they could give, their hatred and their fear. Modern thought for ample reason is jealous of all needless or avoidable State interference with personal liberty; nor do consistent thinkers willingly invoke, in the absence of legal coercion, the usurping power of opinion. It is not intellectual arrogance or personal pride, still less misanthropy, that has induced me, small as is my claim to a place among the Few, rather to pique myself on my own profound indifference to public opinion, whether it be the opinion of a nation or of a village, of a class or of a community. Intellectual and moral development, nay that inventive genius to which civilization owes so much—above all personal dignity and the serenity essential to peace of mind and possibility of happiness, depend for present existence and future progress on the power of the individual to stand alone, apart from, independent of, if necessary defying the intrusive censure or hostile aspect of numbers. Whatever restraint, then, is to be imposed on a matter so closely touching individual right and domestic privacy as the multiplication of diseased constitutions must be imposed by conscience and by conscience alone. I admit the extreme severity—if you will, the cruelty—of the sacrifice demanded by those who hold that persons inheriting latent or



actual disease or infirmity should abstain from marriage. I do not think that the best of us are sufficiently unselfish either in principle or in conduct to have a right to sit in judgment on those who decline to make that sacrifice. But you will remember that it was not primarily of such absolute sacrifices on the part of the sufferers that we spoke. All that any of us were disposed to regard as practically to be exacted by conscience and enlightened judgment was that neither man nor woman should choose a partner in whom there was reason to suspect such a taint. We agreed that fortune, social rank, and all the other considerations which are actually regarded in marriage whether by the parties themselves or by their parents, are trivial and would even on grounds of pure egotism be disregarded, in comparison with those considerations affecting moral and physical soundness which are so commonly neglected by both. On this point I think we none of us seriously differ; and I doubt whether the *S*— itself would be disposed within these limits to deny the justice of our reasoning."

## CHAPTER XIII.

*TRUTH IN COMMON THINGS.*

AT breakfast on Sunday Mrs. Cleveland inquired of each of our party severally, excepting her husband, whether we meant to attend the morning service at Mr. Vere's church, some two miles off. All in the first instance declined; but Gerard, seeing a look of slight disappointment on her face, said, "If you wish to go, Mrs. Cleveland, and if Cleveland is not at liberty to escort you, I shall be honoured and happy in acting as his deputy."

"Thank you," she answered. "Algernon declines on principle to attend the services; though he seldom misses one of Mr. Vere's afternoon sermons, which are intended especially to set forth the theoretical ideas or historical doctrines of that section of the Church to which he belongs. But I should have thought that your views on such matters were so like my husband's that you would feel nearly the same objections to the service, or at least to attend it yourself."

"Perhaps much stronger objections to the service," said Gerard. "Whenever I have discussed theological questions with Cleveland, I have always found him inclined if not actually to maintain yet to regard as defensible many tenets of the Church from which I

entirely revolted. I have heard avowed Secularists revile him for this; and he has more than once shown me that, on many historical and critical issues, the case of orthodoxy is stronger than heretical scholars and anti-theist speculators are at all willing to admit.\* He is on such topics the one fairly impartial and generally dispassionate reasoner of my acquaintance. I did not propose to go to Church from any sense of religious duty, or from any disposition at all in accord with the doctrine or tone of the Liturgy; but simply as an obligation of courtesy due to my hostess in the first place, and for the pleasure of your company in the second."

"Surely," said Mrs. Dalway, "the relative weight you assign to your several motives is somewhat misplaced. You might at least have set the pleasure of a lady's society before the performance of an almost compulsory courtesy."

"I trust," answered Gerard, smiling, "that Mrs. Cleveland will not agree with you. The higher my estimate of the pleasure, the more am I bound to set the duty before it. But—though I am aware that husbands are apt to act as if marriage worked a forfeiture not only of a wife's property and personal freedom, but even of her claim to the courtesies of social life and the privileges of her sex—I did fancy that Cleveland was the last man to let himself be suspected of compliance with a fashion so much worse than many of the vulgar errors for which he displays a contempt proportionate to their popularity. I am accustomed to find the privilege of rendering the services of courtesy readily and graciously abandoned to me by husbands

and brothers; but I should have lost a large stake if any acquaintance had so far forgotten himself as to offer a bet that Mrs. Cleveland could ever be permitted to choose between a solitary walk and a chance guest's attendance. I think," he continued, turning to our hostess, "that I remember some very severe remarks of your husband's, many years ago, on the neglect of courtesy in domestic life; and I should like to know whether, like others, his subsequent experience of that life has changed his convictions or only perverted his practice."

A speech which many men might have resented, and which, to say the least of it, seemed to me to trench on the limits permitted to friendship, failed to disturb in the slightest degree the equanimity of our host, and equally failed to elicit an answer. But his wife replied for him, in a tone somewhat less soft and gentle than usual, and with slightly heightened colour.

"Algernon is as true to his creed on this matter as on all others, Mr. Gerard," she said. "As a Southerner, I have often been surprised at the want of courtesy shown by many English gentlemen to their wives; and have felt that I, as an English wife, should be pained to see my husband pay to other ladies as matter of course attentions of which he thought me unworthy. But Algernon would never allow me to go alone where he fancied I might wish for his company, except to church; and to church he would not escort the Queen."

"I am not quite sure of that, Ida," returned her husband. "The duty which loyal subjects owe to a Sovereign is utterly different, not merely in degree but in kind, from that imposed by the courtesy due either to

sex or rank. Say, however, if you will, that I would not attend a duchess or a princess to church; nor yet, I hope, on any occasion on which I should not offer to escort you."

"But," said Mrs. Dalway, "do you really mean that you think it wrong to go to church?"

"Of course," replied Cleveland, "I do not undertake to pronounce on such a point what is the duty of any one but myself. I say that I should be distinctly wrong in going; otherwise most assuredly I should not inflict on Ida, when we have no volunteer so eager and belligerent as Gerard, what I know must be the pain and mortification of going alone. It is not merely that I disbelieve utterly in the doctrine I should hear from the pulpit; that I could not give even the form of acquiescence to the Creed, or that there is much in the Liturgy from which I dissent. I should have not the slightest objection to attend the service of a mosque; but I could no more join or appear to join in that of the Church of England than in the worship of Seeva or of Jupiter.

"Do not look so startled, Ida, and do not be hurt or indignant. I do not intend in any way to compare the two forms of worship, except as regards my own relation to them. What I mean is simply this. I could join in any worship paid to the one Object to whom alone all religious or spiritual homage is in my opinion due; but worship paid to a creature appears to me distinct and simple idolatry. And idolatry is sinful, whether its object be a man or a monster; a saint like François Xavier, a devil like Ahriman, or a hideous image of abomination like Juggernaut."

“But,” said Gerard, “how can you call the service of the Anglican Church, or of any Christian Church, idolatrous?”

“Simply,” said Cleveland, “because it is not addressed to the Divine Father, but as a rule to Jesus Christ. Not regarding the latter as a Deity, or as different in nature and essence from other men, I can yet accept, so far as to participate therein, the Socinian direction of prayer ‘to the Father through the Son.’ But to join in prayer distinctly addressed to a human creature seems to me sheer idolatry; and idolatry more dangerous than the worship of Seeva or of Jove, when as now its object is not only a real historic personage, but one whose character has unquestionably a rare and peculiar charm for most men, however diverse their temper or opinions, who study it; and a hold on the imagination of the Many so strong and deep that it has caused them to deify him.”

Gerard paused for a moment, and then said, “I am not clear that there is not in the view you have just stated a confusion of thought whereof you are seldom guilty. The Church addresses her prayers to her Redeemer not as Man but as God. You will say that so are the prayers of Hindoos or other pagans addressed to their idols—not as blocks of wood or marble but as images representing supreme Spiritual powers. Granted; but there is an essential distinction. In addressing their prayers to the Son, the Church of England identify Him with the one Supreme Deity you yourself adore; so that in fact there is no more difference between their worship and yours than between yours and the Mohametan. In either case the distinction, traced to its essential meaning and clearly

defined, is only that of a name. Christians address the Creator under the name of Jesus, as the Moslem address Him under the name of Allah or the Jews under that of Jehovah."

"No," said Cleveland. "That is not a fair or full statement of the case. Jesus Christ was himself a real and distinct personage and is conceived as such; and his name, with all its human associations, is not merely another title for the invisible Supreme Being. All (except the Swedenborgians) who worship the Son do in fact distinguish him in their own minds from the Father. The incomprehensible, incredible, unthinkable subtleties of the Athanasian Creed do in some sense identify while striving at the same time to distinguish them; but throughout the Liturgy the Father and the Son are Persons or Personages just as distinct as in Roman Catholic prayers is either from any one of the Saints invoked as intercessors. As a general rule, the vulgar view of Christianity presents the Father as a tyrant—or at best a relentless Fate—from whose wrath and vengeance the Son has delivered or is to deliver his own worshippers. So far from really identifying the two in thought, most orthodox Christians place them, consciously or not, in direct antagonism. Even were it otherwise—even were the Christ of the Gospels really identified by his worshippers with the Supreme Being as in a sense are Buddha and Brahma—it is idolatry for those who believe Christ and Buddha to have been mere men (or even incarnate Angels) to join in worshipping either of them as a God."

"But," said Mrs. Dalway, "I suppose that, among the thoughtful men who attend the Church service at the instance of their families, very few really join in it

heartily and completely. They always make exceptions and mental reservations. Do you mean to condemn them; and if not, why cannot you do the like?"

"Simply because, in the first place," said Cleveland, "I am I, and they are they. Further, I have perhaps thought the problem out clearly; and most of them probably would prefer simple compliance to the needless trouble and inconvenient consequences of ascertaining their own minds and defining their views on such a question. Of course, in attending the Church, I need not join with my lips in her responses or repeat her creeds. But in presence of the congregation I must at least appear to do so; or else I must formally and distinctly express, by gesture or otherwise, my dissent from particular parts. To rise with my neighbours when the Creed is recited, to bow when the name of their Master occurs therein—to kneel (or adopt the fashionable substitute for kneeling) when prayers are addressed to him—is distinctly to 'bow myself in the house of Rimmon.' Now when Naaman asked that such bowing might be permitted to him, I agree with the author of 'Tom Brown' that the prophet did not grant the permission, though he evaded the issue and did not commit himself to a distinct refusal. Yet in that case there was the double excuse of a courtier's official duty to his Sovereign and of imminent and deadly peril in disobedience. Had the Assyrian courtier refused to bow himself before the idol when his master leaned on his hand in the temple, he would in the first place have affronted his sovereign by a formal violation of official duty, and in the second would almost certainly have incurred the penalty of immediate death. It was probably for these reasons that Elisha



bade him 'go in peace.' He did not choose, perhaps, to imperil the permanence of Naaman's inner conviction by exacting from the officer of an Asiatic despot so terrible a sacrifice. But now-a-days there can be no such plea for a concession of the same kind to public opinion or personal affection. I will not affront a whole congregation—and above all I will not hurt the religious feelings of those nearest and dearest to me—by going to church with them in order formally to sever myself from them in the whole or part of their worship. Still less will I go with them to bow myself in that which is to them the Temple of the true God, but to me necessarily the house of Rimmon."

"Certainly," answered Gerard; "no gentleman would take the former course. But pardon me if I say that I still fail to discern any sufficient reason for a refusal externally to accept or at least to acquiesce in the Liturgy of the Anglican Church. Of those who do so it is notorious that a great number object to single passages. Some, like ourselves, feel objections that go much further and deeper. This is so generally understood that no one is deceived by such compliance. On the one hand you cannot fear to deceive or to displease the Almighty, who sees the heart, by a formal concession to the feelings of others. He can hardly be supposed to care whether we do or do not sit down or stand up with others during a service which is to us an empty ceremonial, or even, in your phrase, an act of idolatry. You would not be making any false pretence of devotion to or defection from Him.

'Only a formula easy to patter,  
And, God Almighty! what *can* it matter?'

"On the other hand, while it is true that your formal

acquiescence might be misinterpreted by a few of your less intelligent neighbours, it could hardly mislead any of them in any manner that need trouble your conscience. You are not a local chief or territorial superior. Those who know you sufficiently well to be much influenced by your acquiescence in their worship would know that you did not really and fully accept the doctrines it implies. The rest would not be confirmed in false opinions by your example, since probably they are either indifferent in the matter, or are too deeply convinced or too stolidly fixed by habit in their hereditary tenets to care whether one single parishioner, however distinguished by intellectual repute, agrees with them or not."

"You miss, or I failed to express," said Cleveland, "the grounds of my objection. I do not fear to be condemned as a hypocrite or a deserter from the truth by Him who can read the heart. Nor, again, do I care greatly what my neighbours may or may not think of me; certainly I should not dream of refusing on that account to gratify the slightest wish of my wife. But first, it is as you know a settled rule of ethics that what would be evil in practical effect if done by many—as would be the feigned assent of the whole class of independent thinkers to what they deem falsehood—is wrong in principle if done by any individual. A Christian could not plead his insignificance as an excuse for worshipping Kali or Indra. And moreover, in my opinion and to my feelings, worship, public or private, is the most solemn and sacred of human actions. To convert such an action into a falsehood and a mockery—to commit that idolatry which consists in paying formal wor-

ship to one who is not my God—grossly offends both my conscientious convictions and my unreasoned instincts. It seems an insolence to the Deity, and is in my view a sort of open disloyalty to my spiritual Sovereign. At any rate it is a thing which I simply could not do, any more than a devout Christian could profane the Eucharist. I may say, however, that, had I in view any possible influence of my example upon the uneducated majority of the congregation, I should in that respect feel less scruple in attending than in staying away. I do not think that it would be well—at least at present, or at any time during my probable life—that their hereditary faith should be disturbed or weakened; and in so far as the absence from church of men whose views I share, but whose eminence involves a fifty-fold responsibility, tends to enforce upon the multitude the disquieting knowledge that the intellect of the age more and more inclines to repudiate Christianity, I feel that, though doing our duty, we are doing harm rather than good.”

“I cannot understand that,” said Mrs: Dalway. “Surely you cannot wish to deceive them as to your own belief; nor can you wish to confirm their faith in doctrines you consider false.”

“Why not?” asked Cleveland.

“Because,” interposed Gerard, “in the first place, no gentleman can willingly lie, whether by act or word; and, in the next, because truth must always be wholesome, and falsehood always injurious.”

“Of course,” rejoined Cleveland, “I must not and cannot lie; and the more solemn the subject the less can I permit myself a falsehood or an equivocation

thereupon. But merely as a gentleman, not pretending to be a teacher in regard thereunto, I am under no obligation to speak at all on subjects upon which, save in private conversation, I prefer to be silent; and so long as I do not dishonour myself by spoken or acted falsehood, I should be very glad to avoid weakening in any way the Christian belief of others. I cannot accept the assumption that falsehood in matters of opinion—or more properly speaking speculative error—is necessarily always injurious; or that pure unadulterated truth is in every case and at all times beneficial.”

“I must say,” rejoined Gerard, “that you startle me not a little by expressing such a doubt. I can understand, though with some difficulty, that an absolute infidel or Atheist might take some such view. But you believe as devoutly as any Christian in the fundamental principles of religion—the existence of a Deity, the intelligent creation and Providential government of the Universe. How then can you suppose that essential falsehood on the highest topics can ever be wholesome, without imputing to the Divine Author of human thought and character a design to make falsehood a part of His scheme for the elevation of our nature and the development of His purposes? Do you not in such a suggestion actually accuse Him of deliberately planning to cheat His creatures; in plain language, to lie to them for their own good?”

“No,” said Cleveland. “If, for example, I were to contend that He has implanted in our hearts instincts and ideas essentially and permanently deceptive, I should probably be guilty of some such blasphemy. But I do nothing of the sort. I have never believed

that any idea, however general, which I hold to be substantially false has its root in, or is a necessary development of, those original instincts which we may fairly describe as directly implanted by His hand—as being, in a word, His utterances addressed to our hearts or consciences and intended for our guidance. For instance, I am convinced of the fallacy of that argument in favour of human immortality which is based on the assumption that the widespread belief therein is an innate original instinct of humanity. If that belief were truly instinctive, I should hold it impossible to deny the truth of such instinctive belief without also denying the truthfulness of Him who imparted it; and I could more easily doubt His being than His veracity. But I do not see anything inconsistent with His perfection in the belief that He has so ordered the course of human affairs that false or imperfect views may for a time and in certain stages of human progress be beneficial, while absolute or comparative truth would be premature. No one can carefully study the order of nature or the course of history without seeing that what is evil in one stage or epoch of the Divine scheme of development may be good in another. It is clear indeed that some terrible evils, moral as well as material, have been the instruments through which the ultimate good intended by that scheme has been worked out. For instance, national ambition and personal greed imposed on the world that Roman peace to which we owe a great part—I should say, to which we owe the possibility in its actual form and historic method—of modern civilization. Why may I not equally believe that theological

and moral illusions are part of the same machinery, and are in their time and place necessary and beneficial?"

"Possibly," answered Dalway. "But it is never the part of man so to presume on a fancied knowledge of the Divine policy as to support or even tolerate the evil for the sake of possible good. Those who achieved the Roman peace are not those whom we respect or admire, though they may have been the unconscious agents of Providence. Those who fought against it, Hannibal, Philopœmen, Vercingetorix, command our reverence, as we must believe they received the approval of the Almighty; though no doubt they were resisting the accomplishment of the Divine purposes. When the policy of Providential government requires the temporary triumph of a cause morally evil or unjust, that triumph is secured not by the acquiescence of good men in what they believe to be tyranny and wrong but by the defeat of their steadfast and heroic resistance; and it is this defeat that proves the victors to be useful in that place and time. You will not find in history that justification for the suppression of truth in the supposed interests of humanity which you yourself evidently perceive to be wanting in pure ethics. It is only Providence, with absolute foresight and unerring wisdom, that can have a right to set aside plain moral laws on grounds of immediate or ultimate expediency. To no fallible being is it permissible to do or even to allow evil that good may come."

Here Gerard and Mrs. Cleveland left us, and the rest of our party adjourned to the arbour at the edge of the lawn which in the fine summer weather formed our usual smoking-room.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*BEHIND THE VEIL!*

ALL of us were for some time nearly silent, enjoying the exquisite beauty of the summer morning. We were presently joined by a friend and neighbour of Cleveland's, somewhat older than any of ourselves, who had spent great part of his youth and manhood as an active teacher of what was then called Secularism or Freethinking. Of late, however, he had retired from political and theological controversy, and settled himself alone in a tiny cottage among the Cumberland hills. He justified his withdrawal from the strife chiefly on the ground that the work which he considered essential was accomplished; that thought—which in his earlier days had been fettered not only by social persecution but by actual legal penalties—was now as free as even he could wish to see it. Perhaps, however, he was unconsciously influenced yet more powerfully by the low character, ignorance, and vulgarity of those who had succeeded himself and his former chief in the leadership of the movement in whose front rank he had once held no mean place. When Francis Sterne had been introduced to Dalway and myself, the conversation gradually relapsed almost into its former groove.

"I am not," said Cleveland, "given to admire or even

to tolerate that pseudo-religious sentimentality with which so much of the Materialism of this age is tinged. There is nothing I abhor more thoroughly or despise more heartily than the tendency shown by several writers, whose real doctrines are absolutely Atheistic, to veil offensive and unpopular theories in the language of familiar creeds. I infinitely prefer the gross and brutal blasphemy of Bradlaugh to the disingenuous artifices by which even a man of the highest intellectual courage and finest culture like Matthew Arnold conveys or insinuates similar opinions in language stolen from Christianity. The arrogant bigotry of Positivism (or Nihilism) revolts me infinitely less than this endeavour to misappropriate attractions essentially belonging to a Faith the writer has rejected and is endeavouring to eradicate or undermine. If a man or a sect believe that in fact there is no intelligent personal Governor of the Universe, no conscious Supreme Being with whom man can enter into personal relations, let them have the intellectual loyalty to drop at once all the phraseology and the ceremonial of religion. It is at best half-conscious hypocrisy or sheer silliness to talk of 'worshipping' an abstract Humanity; even were not that average human character of which this ideal Humanity must be a glorified personification obviously worthy rather of contempt and disgust than of worship from thoughtful and cultivated men. Those who have satisfied themselves that there is no such thing as a soul in man, and that the mind is no more than the action of the brain-mechanism—the mere function of certain grey matter, and of nerve-fibres variously arranged and intertwined within the skull—should honestly tell us that our indi-



vidual existence is in every sense confined to some seventy or eighty years; and that according to the latest scientific doctrine the existence of the human race (and of all other highly-organized animals) is probably—even as compared with that of this earth—necessarily limited to a very brief period of time. When they talk of an impersonal ‘immortality’ in the memory of or in influence on future generations, they are either consciously bewildering their converts, or disloyally trying to cheat their own imagination and ours by turning a metaphor into the shadow of that which is nothing if not a living reality. Again I have no sympathy with the ‘poetic atheism’ of the Pantheist; and very little confidence in that sort of sentimental theology which professes a contempt for formal and ceremonial worship on the ground that a higher and more spiritual adoration is rendered by the spirit (or the brain) which simply delights in the sensuous beauty of creation. Nevertheless there is a real and very important truth, such as is seldom to be found in the artificial poetry of that school, in the line which speaks of some who

‘Look through Nature up to Nature’s God.’

No doubt the danger of those who stand aloof from formal and public worship is that they will look *on* and not *through* outward nature; and every one of us needs to be carefully and constantly on his guard against self-deception of this kind. Yet I must say that the beauty of a summer day, with the music of the brooks and the birds, the glory of the sky and of the flowers, does appear to me far more apt than the most splendid and best-adapted ecclesiastic ceremonial

to attune our mood to adoration of Him to whom we owe alike the wonders of nature and the capacity to enjoy them; a capacity not by any means limited to the appreciation of material beauty. I am not myself an astronomer, nor do I feel such profound interest in the starry heavens as affects some of my friends, whose astronomical knowledge is almost as limited as my own, with an enthusiasm I fail to share. But more than one of these friends has told me that he seldom looks on a clear midnight sky, or turns his telescope on a new celestial object of wonder, without realizing in his inmost heart the truth of that other line which declares that

‘An undevout astronomer is mad.’

I suppose nevertheless that a decided majority of men, and certainly an overwhelming majority of women, are—as a matter of fact—more affected by the music of the organ and the grandeur of a temple built by human architects. Still those Christian worshippers who profess to feel as we do in regard to natural beauties and marvels, might at least give us credit for sincerity when we say that to many minds, rendered sensitive by the culture of generations, the works of the Creator’s hand are more suggestive of His presence and providence, more excite our admiration and adoration and direct our thoughts and our emotions more immediately and earnestly towards Him, than the most august ceremonies or the most soul-stirring language with which the devotion of ages has enriched the services of the Church.”

“It certainly should be so,” answered Sterne, “if

there were anything consistent or logical in religion— if there were nothing artificial and unreal in the emotions supposed to be excited whether by the marvels of Nature or by the Liturgies on which the art and the eloquence of so many sacerdotal generations have been lavished. But I suspect that those who really feel themselves moved to conscious direct devotion by the beauties of the earth or the heavens are comparatively very few. They seem to belong almost exclusively to a small and exceptional class of minds, to be found chiefly among those whose originally powerful and sensitive intellects have been cultivated in a very high degree as well as in a somewhat unusual manner by the study at once of science and of poetry. Moreover I incline to think that even their moods of devotion are very brief, and perhaps somewhat far between. Furthermore, in this climate the days of summer music and beauty and the nights of starlight splendour are sadly few; and he whose worship can only be paid under such conditions has what you must consider as dangerously long intervals during which he is liable to relapse into utter worldliness and practical indifference. The Christians at least have the advantage, if it be one, of being reminded at stated intervals—not dependent on the weather of a most ungenial region—that they have what they call souls, which ought in church to forget for a while the state of their ledgers or the fashion of their dress. They are there taught to expect or long to pass into a world from which every single object and purpose that really excites their desire or commands their interest in this life is to be utterly eliminated. I am constantly puzzled to imagine how

they would employ themselves, or how they would endure the monotonous novelty of their being, should their so-called hopes be realized."

"No doubt," said Cleveland, "a good deal of your irony is just; and a still larger part of it, if not actually just, is, in a controversial aspect, fairly justified by what we see and know of the utter inconsistency between Christian profession on Sunday and Christian practice during the week. But there are some to whom the next life is as real as this, and who have so employed themselves in this world that we may fairly believe that they would find no unendurable change in their habits of thought and action if they were transferred ever so abruptly to another. Such of course are and must always be a small minority. If it were otherwise, this earth would be more closely assimilated to Heaven than seems to accord either with the purposes of Providence as discerned in the actual government of this world of ours, or with the promises of the Christian Scriptures."

"I did not know," said Sterne, "that you were among those who supposed themselves to have any special information regarding a supernatural futurity. Nor should I have expected to find a firm believer in Providential government objecting to sanguine hopes for the earthly future of mankind as inconsistent with the tendency of that government, or as requiring from it more than it is capable of realising, at least on this earth."

"You know," replied Cleveland, "that I have no confident or definite convictions respecting any other world than this; but I do not expect or believe that this

life can ever approach the celestial happiness commonly attributed to the other. In speaking of that other, I spoke of course hypothetically, and rather in reference to what theologians assume than to any fixed ideas of my own."

"But," inquired Sterne, "do you seriously believe that there are a dozen Christians in the largest congregation who would not find themselves within a few weeks intolerably bored in Heaven, at least in such a Heaven as we are taught in churches and chapels to expect? Putting aside the grotesque aspects of that Heaven—not condescending even to ridicule the idea of sitting on clouds and singing hymns—the notion of a life

‘Where congregations ne’er break up,  
And Sabbaths have no end;’

forgetting also the blasphemous as well as grotesque absurdities of a Spurgeon, who intends to spend so many thousands of years contemplating each of the Five Wounds—the bliss of the ideal Heaven is to consist exclusively in perpetual worship. Now I admit that what the very few Theists in whose account of their inner life I can implicitly trust have told me—and what I have seen now and then during public or personal devotion in the faces of rapt enthusiasts, generally Catholics—enforces on me a belief that there may be an ecstatic happiness in worship; but this can only last for a very short time, shorter even than the period of other ecstasies. And the deficiency or reaction which so limits its duration is not physical or even exclusively intellectual—does not proceed from mental or bodily infirmity. If it be due to the organization of the

brain, so equally is the mood of worship itself. It is evidently a simple impossibility for human nature to sustain those exalted moods, whatever their direction, for any length of time; and therefore I take it that, as I have said, the immense majority, nay nearly the whole body even of devout Christians would be mortally 'bored' in their own Heaven. Nay, more, I cannot but suspect that they themselves are in their own despite 'unconsciously conscious' that it would be so. The language, the habitual forms of expression, the phrases which evidently conform to the real thought and not to the formal creed of sincere Christians, are scarcely more consistent with their declared belief in a Heaven of intense happiness than are those of unbelievers or of ordinary worldlings. Either they do not thoroughly and earnestly believe in eternity as they believe in time, or they have at heart an unacknowledged preference for this Vale of Tears over the Celestial City of their hymns and prayers; they are no more willing to go to Heaven than sinners are to take their departure for Hell, or sceptics and men and women of the world simply to cease to be. If you or I believed in Heaven as we believe in to-morrow, how could we be afraid of death or care for our own sakes to prolong this life? If we knew, or believed with absolute confidence, that we should wake to-morrow to a joy such as we have never yet known—if, for example, we were about to marry the object of passionate long-cherished love—we should feel in falling asleep a delight like that which children find in going to bed on the eve of some unprecedented treat. But those who solemnly affirm—nay, those who have actually proved by devoting their lives to an un-

profitable profession or to continual self-sacrifice—the sincerity of their doctrine that death is merely the transit to a joy immeasurably greater than that of the happiest bridegroom—do shrink from ‘the momentary sleep of death’ with a horror greater than the most sensitive of opium-eaters ever felt when sinking into those horrible dreams of protracted misery which De Quincey describes with so much intensity of feeling and vividness of language. It is not because they doubt their own salvation; for we see this dread of death just as strong in Calvinists profoundly convinced of their own election as in men who must feel assured that (if there be any truth in the creed they learned in childhood and have never dared to throw off) they must be going into eternal torment. It seems to me impossible to reconcile the frame of mind in which even sincere Christians—men and women who would probably rather submit to martyrdom than deny their Master, and who do really submit to severe restraint and make daily sacrifices for their faith—regard death, with any true inward belief on their part in a future of perfect happiness; with such belief in eternal joy as each of us entertains, I will not say in to-morrow, but even in next year. We see that such people unhesitatingly sacrifice their worldly present to their worldly future. They will pinch and toil and deny themselves to accumulate wealth for their age or for their children. Few of them will work half so hard or sacrifice half so much for their eternal future; yet for that they will often make serious sacrifices. How is it then that, while they would be delighted at the thought that their dearest earthly wishes were about to be fulfilled after a brief sleep, they are anxious to post-

pone as long as possible the realization of delights said to be not merely deeper and higher in kind but infinitely more intense in degree than any that earth can give? Either they feel at heart that the joy will be unsatisfactory, or they have no such assurance of its reality as they feel in regard to a temporal future which, after all, death may intercept. I cannot but think that there is a complete and utter hollowness not merely about the language but about the actual inner thoughts of such persons. Surely there is a monstrous inconsistency in their words, views, and acts. The martyrs of old died in torture for their faith; but then they certainly did not fear death even if they shrank from its attendant agonies. On the contrary, their faith in Heaven was such that in hundreds of instances they invited and provoked not merely death, but prolonged torments from which brave men, and men indifferent to the mere termination of life, would have shrunk with horror. But now-a-days, though we should almost certainly find men and women less unwilling to be martyred than to renounce their hope of Heaven, we should not find one in a million who would regard the near promise of the quietest and easiest death with that joy which scores of martyrs in the first century evinced with unquestionable sincerity at the prospect of being cast to the lions or burnt by a slow fire. Nay, we do not find among Christians even such willingness to die for their Faith as still gives a formidable power to Mohammedan fanaticism. I have always thought that this difference is partly due to the different representations of Heaven held out by the preachers of the two creeds. To the Moslem is promised a life of those delights he can best



appreciate on earth. To the orthodox Churchman or Evangelical Dissenter his spiritual guide proffers an eternity of Sunday morning, the glories of a majestic cathedral or the noisy piety and bare walls of a Bethel; and the poor layman, conscious that he is apt to find the Liturgy too long and the sermon irresistibly soporific, can't fully persuade himself to rejoice in the prospect for which he must all too soon renounce the honest work and real pleasures of the week-day world."

"No doubt," said Cleveland, "there is much in the idea of Heaven, as depicted by Christian preachers, to render it unattractive to their hearers. Hell itself could hardly frighten the children of Evangelical parents more thoroughly than the prospect of a continual Sabbath with all the Sabbatarian associations of their homes; forbidden toys, long sermons, Collects and Hymns to learn, and what seems to them interminable confinement on hard benches—a confinement worse than that of ordinary prisoners inasmuch as they must preserve a stiff and uncomfortable attitude and a countenance of affected gravity. I believe that the little girl who asked whether, if she were very good in Heaven, she might not hope for leave to go down and play in Hell on Saturday afternoons, only expressed with especial clearness and pathos feelings which nine out of ten children of Puritan parents entertain, and would, but for fear of a whipping, vent in words still stronger, if not so telling. Even those adults who really find pleasure in public worship here feel that two hours thereof at a time becomes wearisome. They are taught to suppose that an eternity of the same thing is to be pleasant to them;

but each must inwardly feel that it can become so only to a self so utterly changed that he can scarcely realize or regard it as a self at all. Among those who 'have not so learned' Heaven I have known one here and there whose language and thought were in partial if not perfect accord with their creed; who really regarded death without any other fear than might attach to the probable attendant pain, or to the uncertainty of a journey into a land whose existence they never doubted, which they believe to be infinitely delightful, but which is nevertheless wholly strange and new. I have known those who would have felt no horror and no strong repugnance if told that they would die suddenly and painlessly within a few hours; and who, if they had no especial ties of deep affection binding them to earthly homes, would receive such news with honest pleasure, though perhaps with pleasure alloyed by a certain awe."

"Still," said Sterne, "you will acknowledge that such cases are very rare exceptions. Nine in ten, I should say, even of the small minority whose belief is proved to be in one sense at least sincere—who demonstrate that they think they believe by their sacrifice of pleasures incompatible with Christian hopes—do not speak, save when put on their guard, as if that belief formed a real part of their mental constitution, or gave the tone to their thoughts on life and death, time and eternity. If men really believed in Heaven and Hell as they believe in a future of earthly wealth or poverty, they would not speak as if there were any peculiar merit in taking measures to secure the one and avoid the other. Indeed, the tremendous

importance of the alternative would so far outweigh all the prudential considerations of the present world that no civilized man, inwardly feeling it to be practical reality, could do otherwise than sacrifice instinctively and unhesitatingly as a matter of course this world to the next—seventy years to eternity. Savages we know cannot realize a distant future any more than a large number; and cannot therefore make up their minds steadily to save seed-corn, or undergo the labour of cultivation, for the sake of a harvest to be reaped six months afterwards. But among civilized and educated men the habit of sacrificing the present to the future is so far established that they constantly and habitually make provision for remote contingencies almost as instinctively as do bees and ants, scarcely realizing that conduct so natural involves a sacrifice. If, then, any civilized man believed in the Christian eternity as he believes in an earthly future which after all he may never see, he would regulate his life here with a view to that which is to begin at death just as naturally and as unhesitatingly as he now prepares for an earthly reward ten, or twenty, or thirty years distant. But it is especially with regard to death itself that the language and conduct alike of the most devout and the most worldly believers are signally inconsistent and incompatible with their professed, and not dishonestly professed, convictions. According to their profession, nay, according to a fixed conviction which they at least honestly believe themselves to hold, death is only a passage from one state of existence to another. Yet, when not regarding it from a religious standpoint—when not, as I said

just now, put on their guard—they speak of it in language absolutely Pagan and evidently regard it as the end of all things. If they do not fear it, it is because and when they are, it would seem, really half tired of existence itself. When they speak of the dead or of the approaching death of the living, you see that their real instinctive thought looks only to the grave and not beyond it. To them, as to the Pagan, death is the most absolute separation. Otherwise, how should an aged parent mourn inconsolably over the death of a child? We know that the death of dearly loved children while the parents are still living is felt as one of the most terrible of human calamities. Yet from the Christian standpoint it is exactly the reverse. A man of seventy loses a favourite child of eighteen or twenty. If death be merely the passage to another life, they will meet again within some half-a-dozen years, whereas they had reasonably expected that the death of the parent in due course would separate them for half a century. Nevertheless they mourn over this alleged prospect of speedy reunion as over the horror of an irreparable, final parting. Again, according to the Christian creed, death can hardly be a calamity even to the hardened sinner, since it can matter very little whether he enter eternal torture thirty years sooner or later. To the redeemed it is the greatest of blessings. Yet an aged parent will see with comparative equanimity his child depart to Australia, to the hardships and trials of a colonial life, feeling assured that they will never meet again on this side the grave. If that child goes to Heaven instead, so that they may hope to meet again in a very few years, the parent's heart is broken. How

can you reconcile this preference of a long separation to a short one, of a doubtful and distant journey to a short and safe one, if the heart feel as the lips speak: if the parties believe in the existence of Heaven as they believe in that of Australia?"

"Frankly," answered Cleveland, "I do not think that the common language of Christians admits of reconciliation with their professed belief. Logically belief in immortal life and the common feelings respecting death are of course incompatible. Morally, they appear so; yet as matter of fact we know that the future life is honestly believed in and hoped for by millions; nay, that they never admit to themselves a doubt of it. Somehow or other, then, these two seemingly irreconcilable ideas are compatible, for they exist together."

"Nay," said Sterne, "they do not I suspect actually co-exist without conflicting, but succeed each other as different states, sometimes violent revulsions, of thought in the same mind: or, as we sometimes see in other examples of mutually destructive ideas, occupy stations in the inner world of thought so far apart that they never affect each other. Such a mind, dwelling in practical mood on the world of visible realities where-with it is familiar, or giving utterance to the unchecked impulses of primary human instinct, recognises in death the utter end of that existence with which alone it is habitually conversant; in a religious mood, when recalled to the ideas implanted by education, it strives more or less successfully to follow in thought the path of the disembodied soul beyond the impenetrable darkness into a sphere whose conditions, whose very

existence, the intellect has never questioned, the imagination never realized."

"Perhaps," answered Cleveland, "the secret of your puzzle lies in those last words. People believe in Heaven—that is to say, they accept the doctrine and believe in it as we believe for example in the enormous distances separating star from star. But—as those enormous distances present no definite idea to our minds and therefore cannot affect our conceptions of space—so men's theoretical faith fails to impress their imagination, or affect their instinctive tendency to confine their habitual thoughts to familiar realities. The creed accepted by the reason or impressed on the memory fails to influence the unconscious imagination which paints in cold outline or in vivid colours those pictures which alone enable us to regard as realities—to realize—the remote or the unknown. Yet, while nearly all of us fail so to realize a future beyond the grave as that it shall seriously influence our feelings and control our way of regarding life and death, we find it at least equally impossible effectively to realize in thought our own annihilation; or to imagine a time when we shall not be or think, an universe from which our personality shall have been for ever blotted out; above all, selves no longer conscious of self-existence."

"It is true," said Sterne, "that we cannot think of ourselves as annihilated or dead; that we can at most imagine ourselves disembodied and departed from this life and from the visible universe. Many illusions and many false arguments owe their origin to this inability. I fancy that half the anxiety, even of the ancient world and of ignorant people nowadays—all the anxiety

felt, at any rate, by intelligent men—respecting the disposal or treatment of their dead bodies, arises from an inability to realize completely that their bodies will at death cease to be or to contain themselves. Otherwise—since whether the self, the *ego*, be an independent spirit or a mere function of the brain, it will equally have departed or ceased from the body—why should any one care more for his own dead form than for an old suit of clothes? The sentiment so common even among the most unsentimental and most sceptical, that we should wish our nearest and dearest to visit our graves, implies a similar superstitious illusion; an unacknowledged feeling that we ourselves shall be there and be conscious of the love still shown to us. Nay, I believe that what is called the instinctive or innate belief in immortality—the faith, more or less distinct and confident, of nearly all tribes and races in a future life—proceeds in no small measure from the same peculiar limitation imposed on imagination by the natural, perhaps necessary conditions of thought.”

“But,” said Mrs. Dalway, “do you think it natural (since it seems so impossible) to be indifferent about the fate of our bodies after death? Christians perhaps from their standpoint should be indifferent, because they believe that their souls or selves will be far away. Perhaps, too, sceptics should be almost equally stoical, since they are convinced that their consciousness, their *ego*, will at any rate not remain with the corpse, or be affected by evidences of unkindness in the survivors. And yet we all feel so keenly about the dead bodies of our friends that it can hardly be natural or possible to be careless about our own.”

"I myself," said Cleveland, "am utterly careless both about the disposal of my own remains and about those of my friends. If I have any remnant of feeling on the subject it is a horror of the earthen grave, which I believe arises solely from a nervous unreasoning fear of being buried alive."

"I know," said Mrs. Dalway, "that you are especially precise in the statement of a paradox; but I can hardly believe that you would be indifferent as to what became of the dead body of a very dear and intimate friend, say of your wife or child."

"Ah!" replied Cleveland, "a different feeling comes into play there. Men feel very keenly and very exceptionally about the physical forms of women dear to them. We attach something of sanctity not merely to the personality but to the person of a wife, a sister, or a daughter. In respect of the wife there is no doubt a different and deeper feeling—something beside and distinct from mere reverence—for the body, upon which I need not dwell. But the instincts inherited from chivalry force us to regard the very physical forms of women, especially of women belonging to us, as something sacred, which in death as in life must not be roughly touched, which it would be intolerable to our feelings to see exposed, neglected, or even approached by coarse or indifferent hands. Such a feeling has no relation to the question we are discussing. The man who would without a pang contemplate the probability that his own corpse, or even that of his father or son, would be devoured by wolves on a battle-field, would revolt most passionately from the thought of an affront to the dead body of a woman loved or revered



in death as in life. Go on, Sterne, with your argument: for this digression can at most serve to clear away an incidental confusion."

"I say then," said Sterne, "that we can think of an universe existing apart from ourselves, of the entire creation as a whole to which we no more belong, if we forget ourselves entirely. But there seems always to be a latent conception of ourselves as conscious of the Cosmos we have quitted. We cannot conceive of ourselves as non-existent, because the conception of self inseparably involves the idea of existence and of consciousness. We can think of our *ego* only as a conscious entity; and by that primary and paramount law of thought which renders a contradiction unthinkable, it is impossible that we should realize our own nonentity."

"Does not that very inability to realize annihilation," said Mrs. Dalway, "constitute a familiar and powerful argument against annihilation? Those who use that argument say that instinct is never false."

"Pardon me," said Sterne. "You miss the very point of my reasoning. My point is this, that the inability to conceive our own nonexistence is not a special instinct but the necessary consequence of a general law of thought. We can—at least, I do not know that we cannot—conceive the annihilation of a friend, especially if we have seen his body burned to ashes; but we cannot, and probably no thinking being can, conceive of the same object at once as existent and nonexistent. Now to conceive self is to conceive, to imagine, to realize the one existence of which we are actually and directly—not mediately—conscious; conscious not

through inference from our senses, but inevitably and inherently. We cannot think of an existence as non-existent; therefore we cannot conceive of our own annihilation, because we are to our own minds essentially and absolutely conscious existences. In a word, conscious existence being the very essence of selfhood, to think of ourselves as nonentities we must cease to think of ourselves at all."

"I admit," said Cleveland, "the full force of your argument, so far as it goes. I admit that no reasonable inference in favour of immortality can be drawn from our inability individually to conceive our nonexistence. This seems to be, as you say, not a special instinct, but an inevitable, inseparable corollary or consequence of one of the necessary, radical and, so far as we can judge, probably universal laws of thought. As I am inclined to believe that these laws are identical in the lowest and highest—as I doubt whether the Creator Himself could have made two and two five, or ordained a triangle with two right angles—so I doubt whether any thinking entity could think of himself as having ceased to be. But I do not think that this limitation of our conceptions has any relation to that widespread vague belief in a spiritual life which prevails so extensively among the most various and distant human families. That belief can hardly have been derived by one from another, but must be either an innate instinct or a consequence of almost universal conditions. I fancy that the generally prevalent conception of a Hades, wherein some sort of *eidolon*, whether the shadow or the soul, continues to exist after death, arises from a quasi-instinctive conviction of the con-

tinued existence rather of others than of ourselves. For some reason or other few human races — till their natural instinctive feelings are overruled by the results of deliberate thought and artificial education — seem able to believe that their dead have ceased to be. We know how the ablest of those sceptics who have most profoundly studied the growth of human thought are generally disposed to explain this persistent though very indefinite and shadowy belief in a future existence which in many cases is hardly to be called life. They tell us that savages cannot discriminate clearly between the images seen in dreams and those received by the waking senses; that, dreaming of the dead, savages forthwith assume that the dead have been with them. I cannot think that even savages are quite so stupidly and perversely inconsistent. They dream that the living meet them, speak with them, act with or upon them, and when they wake they find at once that these visions of the night are mere delusions. Why should they assume or accept a different, nay, an opposite idea respecting the dead? Red Cloud, for example, dreams that Spotted Tail who is living, and Hard Heart who is dead, went with him last night moose-hunting. He realizes that the whole was an illusion; that there was no moose-hunt, and that Spotted Tail was at the time a hundred miles away. Why must he suppose that Hard Heart was actually with him? Again, the fact of death—the consciousness of separation—makes so deep an impression, that as a rule we dream fifty times of the living for once that we dream of the dead. It seems incredible that one dream impression—nowise distinguishable from others—should be arbitrarily

accepted as a reality, while all the rest are clearly known to be unreal."

"I had," said Dalway, "a very curious experience in regard to the dream-visions of the dead. When it happened, I had lost only one dear friend. Long after her death I dreamt of her, fully aware in my dream that she was dead. But of that dream I remember no more. More than two years later, in the midst of visions of scenery and persons certainly nowise connected with her or with any association that could recall her, I became conscious of some one coming into the room through a curtained doorway, and looking up saw her before me as in life. I exclaimed, 'Why, ———, you are dead; how is it that I see you as alive?' She answered, 'Because you are asleep.' Thereupon I puzzled myself for a moment whether I were in truth asleep or awake, and then went on with my dream. Can you see any natural explanation of so curious an incident?"

"Only one," said Cleveland. "Some people dream much more vividly than others and believe while dreaming more fully in the reality of their dreams. You probably belong to the class of dreamers who are often made half aware, by the dimness and vagueness of dream-impressions, that they are dreaming and not waking? Well then, the reappearance of your friend suggested half-consciously to your mind the fact that you had formerly seen her in a dream, and—as constantly happens in dreams—your own idea, embodied in words, was put into the mouth of the dream-image."

"But," said Sterne, "if you refuse to believe that the idea of Hades has arisen from dreams, do you believe that it is really the survival of some primeval revela-

tion, or the effect of an instinct given to man at that date—to whatever stage of race-development it be assigned—when he is held somehow suddenly to have become an immortal creature; or at least what St. Paul calls ‘a living soul’?”

“No,” said Cleveland. “On the whole I find it impossible to believe in any *primæval* revelation. Your other alternative of an impressed instinct, conferred at some particular stage of human development through those natural agencies by which the Creator usually or always works, does not appear to me incredible or extravagant; but at the moment I can think of no evidence in its favour.”

“Then,” said Sterne, “to what do you attribute the fact that remote races all over the world do, as a rule though not universally, believe in the continued existence of the dead?”

“You will be greatly surprised,” said Cleveland, “by my answer. I believe it to be due mainly, and perhaps entirely, to actual if not real phenomena; to those visions of the departed which—however we may choose to explain them—are among the best established of ‘occult mysteries,’ *i.e.*, of exceptional human experiences. Scarcely any fact in history not attested and recorded by eye-witnesses is more certain than that in every age men have seen what are called ghosts—that is to say distinctly apparent images of the departed; often so exactly and in every respect resembling, as to have been momentarily mistaken for, the living forms of the individuals they represented, whenever the seer has for an instant forgotten or has not been aware that the latter were dead. You may if you choose say that

all these visions have been pure delusions; though there are strong reasons against any such sweeping assertion,—several of the appearances being seen by two or more persons at once, or authenticated by contemporaneous death or other circumstances under conditions which render the favourite explanation of sceptics—mere (or accidental) coincidence—incompatible with the law of probabilities. But whether real or not, whether often due to external actual images presented to the retina or always the work of the seer's imagination, such appearances have been in every age sufficiently frequent to render them a subject of perplexity to impartial and unbigoted inquirers. The almost universal belief of races and ages the most remote from each other in the existence of a soul surviving the dissolution of the body, coincident as it is with an almost equally general concurrence of testimony avouching the occasional apparition of the dead to the eyes of the living, seems to me to indicate that the continued existence of the departed has been believed because the evidence—at least to primitive races among whom the habit of distrust and scepticism was not yet established—sufficed to prove that the departed could and did reappear.”


“Do you really think,” said Sterne, “that there is any solid evidence of the reappearance of the dead; any evidence that will bear cross-examination; in short, that would not be absolutely excluded by the rule of our law, rejecting what is called hearsay? Does it not in almost every case come to us at second-hand, and without the verification of details or the attestation of names?”

‘No,’ replied Cleveland. ‘Your representation of the case is not correct. In a certain sense all historical evidence is second-hand. In that sense, and in that sense only, the same epithet may be applied to the best-attested ghost stories. But as we accept confidently the assertions of contemporary historians with regard to matters of general notoriety or familiar to many living when the history was published, provided these statements were not then and there disputed; so I think we must on the whole accept as personal evidence any report of personal experience published by an author to whom the story was related by an eye-witness, provided that the book appeared during the life of that eye-witness and that no correction was made. This is the case of all that evidence with regard to apparitions of the dead or dying on which I place any reliance. You would be, I think, somewhat surprised—I certainly was so when I began to study the question carefully—to find what a considerable mass of such evidence exists. It is little known because it is much scattered, and the books in which some of the best information on the subject is collected are little read, and have dropped to a great extent out of circulation. Moreover, the authors of many such books—like Robert Dale Owen, and even Mrs. Crowe—do not know what evidence means. For example, Mr. Owen says in substance ‘X, a young girl, told me that she and nineteen of her schoolfellows witnessed a most curious kind of apparition, the double presence of a governess at the same moment in the school-room and in the garden commanded by its window. *Here is an*

*apparition attested by twenty witnesses.*' Of course it is nothing of the sort. As regards X, the story is that of a single eye-witness. As regards her school-fellows, the evidence is second-hand, and not only second-hand but given through the first witness; so that it has little or no weight as confirmation of her story. If she lied, she would lie equally as regards the fact itself and the testimony of her companions. This is a fair example of the value of Mr. Owen's judicial capacity, and of the critical faculty of some other collectors of 'supernatural' stories. Nevertheless, carefully sifting what they do tell us and what we learn from more discriminating writers or from personal evidence, we find no inconsiderable amount of testimony respecting the reappearance of the dead which is essentially of the historical character; which is quite as good as that on which we accept any fact in history the truth of which was from the necessity of the case known only to one, two, or three persons. But the vital points to which I would call your attention are two. First, a proportion of these ghost stories so large that the law of chances excludes the notion of mere accident are confirmed by coincidences more or less striking. Secondly, the ghostly apparitions belonging severally to races the most distant and periods the most remote tend to confirm each other by the presence of certain identical characteristics not likely to have been copied by one imaginant from others or to have occurred spontaneously to the imagination of numerous different ghost-seers in different ages and countries. I believe that no one who has read the evidence or any considerable part of it will attempt to



explain it by supposing that either seers or narrators bore false witness. The negative or sceptical explanation with which we have to deal is illusion. I think I am fairly entitled to say that a considerable number of cases wherein a person was seen at or near the moment of death by relatives hundreds of miles away are authenticated beyond reasonable doubt. We must admit that the appearance was actually presented to the mind if not to the eyes of the ghost-seer; and presented so distinctly and vividly that, except when the impossibility of physical presence was obvious and remembered at the instant, the apparition was completely and unhesitatingly mistaken for the person it represented, until it disappeared or in some other manner demonstrated its unsubstantial nature. I rely only on the cases in which no immediate expectation of the death was entertained by the seer. You can account for these only by supposing that the seer, without the shadow of reason, was—generally for the first and last time in life—deceived by a spectral illusion; one of the rarest forms of insane impressions on sane minds; and that by some extraordinary coincidence this most often momentary hallucination was contemporary with the death of the person whose form was supposed to be seen. This coincidence might happen once in ten thousand cases; but it is invoked to explain nine thousand nine hundred and ninety. Now, while the number of instances in which apparitions are said to have occurred at the moment of death, or just after, forms by far the largest element in the entire number of apparitions so attested as to be worth taking into



account, the well-verified instances of visions not coincident with the death are fewer and are for the most part attended by circumstances of a character for which mere illusion will hardly account.\* It seems then,—putting aside another class of visions, those peculiar apparitions of the living where circumstances contradict the theory of illusion\*—that nine cases in ten of apparitions of the dead or dying, alleged by sceptics to be spectral illusions, are nearly contemporaneous with the death of the person appearing. This no mathematician, nay, no person of common sense, can possibly explain as mere chance coincidence. If there be no connection between the death and the apparition, if the coincidence be not causal but accidental, it ought not to occur more than say once in ten thousand cases. The evidence on this point is so overwhelming that after a frank and full study of the facts, some who disbelieve in the soul altogether have admitted a belief or a half-belief that, somehow or other, appearances at the moment of death to friends and relatives are under exceptional conditions possible. If such apparitions—by far the largest class—were the only ones whose objective nature was attested by circumstantial evidence we might grant that the question was at least doubtful whether they do or do not afford any proof of a soul

\* Few people are aware how common are recorded instances of apparitions of the living, in which the urgent wish of the person seen to meet the seer, or some other verification independent of the seer's volition or imagination, render the idea of illusion wholly unsatisfactory. Even so practical and unimaginative a writer as Mr. Russell, the Prince of Correspondents, relates such an experience in his "Diary" of the Franco-German War, as occurring during the later days of his sojourn at Versailles.

separate or capable of separation from the body. But there are also many examples of the apparition of persons some time dead authenticated by attendant circumstances. From the nature of the case these can comparatively seldom admit of proof totally excluding, as in the other class of apparitions, the idea of illusion; inasmuch as the confirmation of coincidence and contemporaneity is here excluded. There are however signal exceptions. There are some apparently authentic cases on record of apparitions long after death but before the death was known to the seer. There are also a limited number of cases in which the reality of the apparition was—I will not say proved, but—strongly indicated by various attendant conditions, for instance, by information given or effects following. I have never been able fully to satisfy myself that these instances are so sustained by irrefragable evidence, and so decisive in themselves, as to prove a future life or to render it irresistibly probable. It is very difficult to weigh against each other masses of logical evidence of utterly unlike nature. The assured, indubitable return of one single person from behind the Veil would be decisive against any amount of *à priori* improbability. But no such return can be absolutely certain, if only because witnesses may lie, or lying and personation may be possible to some invisible agents—as it is said to be the case with the so-called ‘spirits’ of the Table-movement. Thus the proof afforded by the best authenticated *revenant* is reduced in kind; brought down from the plane of certain demonstration to that of moral probability. And then comes in the counter-

vailing weight of physical probabilities, whose comparative value it is hard to assign. That weight falls short of demonstration, and owes its influence chiefly to analogy, to our recollection how similar accumulated evidence has swept away so many of the strongest outworks of orthodoxy; but the physical facts are certain, while the most impartial among us—however contemptuous of that pretentious perversity of science which refuses to examine evidence on the sole ground that it conflicts with received ideas of the possible—must feel that a doubt hangs over the fundamental fact on the other side, the objective existence of the apparitions. Ascertained physiological and psychological phenomena tend to suggest if not to prove that every element of human life and personality, from nervous force and reflex action up to the moral sense and the highest functions of conscience, is subject to physical influences and liable to be disturbed or destroyed by physical causes. It is a significant fact that the arguments whereon a man like Bishop Butler relied to sustain belief in the existence of a soul are deprived of nearly all their force by subsequent study of the functions of the brain and nervous system. But of this I feel sure: there is such evidence of the reappearance of the dead and distant apparition at the hour of death as would by itself suffice to account for an almost universal belief in a soul and a future existence, in every community in which civilization has not rendered the critical and negative temper clearly predominant, and produced in the higher intellect of the age a predetermination that no evidence can prove a miracle.”

"Now," said Mrs. Dalway, "I should like to know how common these ghost appearances really are. They always seem to me to be told at second or third hand. Somebody knows somebody who was told by somebody else that a relative or friend of the original teller saw a ghost. We may be quite sure that in such cases we do not get the exact story as it was told by the actual seer; and very likely if we had that story we should find that what seems the decisive evidence of its truth was imported into it after it left the lips of the primary witness. Did any one of us four, our wives or husbands, ever come into direct personal contact with a ghost or a ghost story?"

"Yes," was the reply elicited from one of the party. "It is a curious fact that several attempts were made by competent artists to paint in her youthful matronhood the portrait of a near connection of my own. In every case but one the failure was signal, and the result a wretched daub—mostly so bad that those familiar with the painter's usual style and previous achievements could not recognize or accept it as his. Every one of the artists died before or soon after the portrait was completed, save a single amateur who was brought to death's door by a long and severe illness. I cherish no superstitions, and least of all could I, having once definitely appreciated the meaning of the Theory of Chances, be affected by the superstition of "luck"—the delusion that the recurrence of an evidently accidental combination in the past affords any indication, one way or another, as to its repetition in the future. Still I doubt whether I could voluntarily take upon myself the responsibility—at least, without stating what has

already occurred—of inviting another attempt. Well, before painter A. had quite finished my friend's portrait he began those of her infant sister and brother. He was consumptive, and very irritable. A servant came into the room where he was painting, and passed behind him to look at the picture. He spoke sharply to her; and this was the only meeting between them, the only incident which could in anywise impress the thought of him on her mind. A few weeks later, after illness had interrupted his work for some time, this servant, going to open the basement shutters in the morning, saw the painter standing with his back to the kitchen grate, after one window at least was open. Startled, and knowing that he could have no legitimate business there at that hour if he were there at all, she ran back and fell, half fainting, with a scream, on the kitchen stairs. Her mistress went down, found her there, and heard the story. Within a few hours afterwards, either that day or the next, the mistress and I myself heard from an eye-witness the particulars of the painter's death on that very morning, and apparently about that very moment. The death, from suffocation, was sudden and very horrible. The painter's last speech was a request to be lifted that he might see himself in the glass, and I believe he died in that act. But the last, or nearly the last, topic on which he spoke eagerly a few minutes before he died was his anxiety to finish the portraits in question. Here you have a ghost-story in which hallucination seems morally impossible, in the absence of anything that could provoke or evoke any spectre, and of anything that could suggest the idea of the artist to the mind of the ghost-seer at the moment; and

the relator was in the house at that very time, intimate with all the family and conversant with all the facts. Whatever incidents in this story did not come within my own immediate knowledge were related to me at the time, by the lady who found her servant fainting on the stairs immediately after seeing the apparition. The strange account of the spectral visit was known throughout the household some hours before we heard of the painter's death. The circumstances of his death were told to the lady by an eye-witness within a very short period after it occurred. None of us were expecting such tidings at that time. The servant was most unlikely even to have known that the artist was seriously ill, and certainly had no such interest in him as could account for a spectral illusion taking his form."

"I incline to think," said Cleveland, "that there are not fifty households, taken at random among those classes to whom hereditary culture has restored some of the impressibility of primitive man, in one or more of which some such incident has not at some time occurred. Now in sane persons spectral illusions are exceedingly rare. In all my acquaintance I know but one man or woman who has ever experienced anything of the kind; and in this case there is nothing that resembles in the least the apparitions we are discussing. The illusive forms appear very rarely, and are connected with intense headache; they endure only for a few seconds, and are of the dullest, least interesting nature imaginable. In people not diseased or subject to paroxysms of nervous pain, proven spectral illusions are I suspect much less common than those cases of ghost-

seeing wherein coincidence of time or other conditions render the hypothesis of mere illusion exceedingly difficult to sustain."

"I cannot say," replied Sterne, "that I have ever gone into the matter deeply enough to enable me to contradict or dispute your statement, though from my conversation with medical men I should say that it is greatly exaggerated."

"I ought," rejoined Cleveland, "to have qualified it thus. Spectral illusions (proven to be such) occurring incidentally to sane persons not liable to repeated disturbance of the nerve-system from neuralgic paroxysms are as rare as I have represented them. But in nine cases out of ten the ghost-seer sees a ghost once or twice in life and no more. Therefore the theory which accounts for all such apparitions on the ground of illusion is distinctly in conflict with such facts as we do know. Observe that my friend, though liable beyond ordinary persons of sound brain to momentary deceptions of sight, has never for a moment supposed himself in his waking hours to have seen a ghost. In short, ghost-seeing and spectral illusion recognizable as such are so entirely unlike and unconnected that they very seldom if ever occur to the same persons. Out of some hundreds of ghost-stories I remember but two or three at this moment where the seer was habitually subject to apparitions; and these apparitions were not such as could be alleged with certainty to be illusive. Moreover many apparitions have been seen by two persons at once, which disposes absolutely, *pace medicorum*, of the spectral theory so far as these are concerned."

"I think," said Mrs. Dalway, "that you said just



now that the ghost-stories confirm each other. How can they do this?"

"In two ways," said Cleveland. "First, their prevalence among the most diverse nations, of different ages, religions, climate, and character, under the most various conditions, militates greatly against any attempt to explain them away as mere illusions of sense. Secondly, their essential resemblance in some particulars—most unlikely to have occurred independently to the imagination of scores of individuals severed by long ages in time and by thousands of miles in space—is very difficult to account for, unless by accepting them as genuine phenomena, independent of the seer's personality and possessing some sort of objective reality. Such general resemblances indicate at least an extraneous existence common to all the apparitions of all ages and races, and due to a common cause working through permanent natural (not necessarily material) law. Imagination would probably have clothed the ghost in the ceremonies of the grave or have presented it naked, or in some garment supposed to be suitable to another world; as Christians fancy angels with wings and in long white nightgowns. But in fact apparitions so dressed are almost unknown. Wherever we learn how a ghost is supposed to be clothed, it appears with the very garments it wore in life. Wherever any exception occurs, there seems to be an obvious and distinct reason for it, on the assumption that the vision represents a reality. Thus, one of the pet objections of sceptics is really, in the universality of its truth, one of the strongest evidences in favour of the objective character of these apparitions. The ghosts

of all ages and nations again resemble one another in a quality which neither fiction nor imagination would have ascribed to them—want of power, and generally want of definite purpose. Homer described the inhabitants of Hades as his individual fancy painted them; but that fancy must have been dominated by the ideas of his audience. Now the Homeric ghosts resemble closely the ghosts of every age down to our own in the last peculiarity which the free fancy of the inventor or the impressible but passive mind of the ghost-seer would have attributed to them; apparent impotence. They are *νεκρῶν ἀμεινῶν κάρηνα*—as they still appear. The resemblance descends even to detail. The Homeric ghosts cannot speak till they taste blood: *i.e.*, in their native condition, unaffected by the arts of the magician, they can present themselves to the eye but cannot affect the ear. Now this is a notable feature in modern ghost-stories. Generally the apparition cannot speak; sometimes it is driven to use strange symbols to express its meaning; sometimes it can make its presence perceptible to many but only one can hear its voice—*i.e.*, it does *not* speak audibly, but impresses its meaning on the most receptive mind by what seem to be spoken words. These strange limits of power, common to ninety-nine ghosts out of a hundred, are the opposite of all that mere imagination would have suggested. This peculiarity is the scoff of sceptics; yet it is just the sort of characteristic which, since it is contrary to all *a priori* expectation and yet so generally found to occur, is strong evidence in favour of some external reality.”

## CHAPTER XV.

### *PHYSICAL PROOF AND PSYCHICAL EXPERIENCE.*

"SOMETHING," said Mrs. Dalway, "in your observations on the treatment of the corpse reminds me of a suggestion which I have more than once heard, and which more than one of the most thoughtful and impartial writers on the subject seem to consider impressive and probably true. It is said that in standing beside the dead body of a friend, we never feel that the form before us is actually the person we knew and loved. That person, that *ego*, must be then, elsewhere or nowhere; and *nowhere* an entity or that which was five minutes ago an entity hardly can be. Besides, it is argued, if the body be not our friend, he must have been something else than the body; and that something else need not—for aught we know—have been affected by death. On this hypothesis, we feel instinctively that there was something in the living form of our friend which has departed from the dead form; and that something was the man himself. If so, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the man himself was *not* his body; that rather he was a being clothed with that body. I do not put this suggestion forward as believing in it myself, but I should like to know what others think of it."

"In the first place," said her husband, "I cannot admit the fact. When at college in London I went repeatedly into the dissecting-room of the medical branch. I saw many dead bodies there, and never felt the slightest human interest in them. Seeing them cut and carved no more disturbed me than seeing the carcass of a sheep outside a butcher's shop. Again, I have stood by the death-beds of dear friends. I have seen them, unconscious but living, a few hours before they expired. I have seen them again a few hours after death, and I certainly felt no such utter change, no such novel impression as you have described. I knew of course fully and realized clearly that my friend was dead; but I had no such instinctive perception of a change or departure of the identity as would have made me feel *instinctively* that there could be no revival. Had the dead suddenly stood erect before me the fact would have affected me with intellectual wonder but not with instinctive astonishment. I mean that I should have been surprised, not at the very first moment by the occurrence of a shock to my instincts in the conversion of the lifeless image into the living person, but only after an instant's thought, when I had recollected that one who certainly was dead had visibly returned to life."

"It seems to me," remarked Cleveland, "that your first experience rather contradicts the second. Had the corpses in the dissecting-room seemed to you identical with the living patients, you would have been at first more or less shocked and revolted by seeing the naked forms on the table and the rough treatment to which they were subjected by the students. Evidently

you really felt that they were something so utterly distinct from the living person, whether you had known that person or not, that you did not regard them as human beings at all."

"True," said Dalway. "It happened that I had never seen them in life; but certainly I did not look at them instinctively as dead men and women, but simply, according to the phrase of medical students, as 'subjects' for experiment in anatomy. I should like, however, to ask you to put in somewhat plainer and fuller terms the meaning of your remark that all physical evidence is opposed to a belief in human immortality."

"Perhaps," said Sterne, "I, who have often discussed this question with Cleveland, can state the materialistic view of life and thought more distinctly and forcibly than he; who, though by logical necessity a sceptic, is, I strongly suspect, a sceptic against his will and in despite of his own instincts, and can hardly be called a Materialist. There is in the language of many reasoners on this subject a certain confusion, not extending to their ideas, between the immortality and the existence of the soul. Of course if the soul do not exist it cannot be immortal; but it might exist and yet perish with the body. The arguments to which Cleveland referred assail the immortality of the soul only through their bearing on its existence as a distinct entity. The theory of the Materialists is that there exists in man nothing but the physical frame, subject to two classes of force, (perhaps to two forces only) the chemical and the vital. Chemical agencies support the living frame by digesting its food, assimilating the nutritive portions, nourishing the various parts of the

body, and disposing of its waste. But, if acting alone, chemical forces would destroy the body, as they do destroy it very quickly after death. The vital forces—which may perhaps one day be resolved into a single force identical with or analogous to electricity—empower it to subsist, to move, to breathe, to perform all properly animal functions (for those of digestion and nutrition are common to vegetable life also); and, as Materialists believe, enable the brain to think and to will; to convey through the nerve fibres the commands of the Intelligence, and receive through the same fibres the report of the senses, or the impressions with which material objects affect them. According to Spiritualists (by which term I designate all believers in a soul) thought, especially in its higher operations and its supposed relations with invisible beings, is not within the capacity of matter. A thinking creature must in their opinion be possessed of something more than a body. Matter, they say, cannot think. The grey stuff and the twisted complicated nerve-fibres of the brain cannot realize and reproduce sights, events, sensual impressions; much less can they originate and record ideas and inferences independent of the senses. The material of the brain cannot, they say, conduct a conversation, construct a novel, elaborate a philosophical theory, or lay down and execute the plan of a history. Behind or within the brain and controlling it there is, they tell us, a soul which is the very self of the man; which is clothed with the body, which uses the brain as an instrument—a sort of electric battery—through which it transmits telegraphic orders by the nerves to the muscles, and receives impressions from external nature.

The Materialists admit that while sure of the fact they cannot apprehend the method; cannot understand *how* certain tissues, not differing essentially from the other tissues of the body except in diverse construction, and perhaps containing a larger amount of phosphorus, can perform the functions of thought, even as exercised by the lower animals and by savages; still less how such tissues can fulfil all those marvellous intellectual functions which distinguish the action of the most powerful human minds. No Materialist can understand how the grey matter secretes thought, how the brain-vibrations are converted into ideas, and the phosphorus of the tissues expended in the production of a history or a poem: nor yet can the Spiritualist explain by what sort of process the stimulation of the nerve-ends embedded in the skin can be so transmitted and transmuted in passing through the brain as to reach the supposed soul, and there awaken the spiritual nature to wrath or pleasure, mirth or melancholy. The conversion of material waste into spiritual life, the process by which the indubitably real action of the brain and nerves, the burning up of a small amount of matter there, can originate the subsequent action of the mind and take effect in profound thought or passionate emotion, is as inexplicable by one party as by the other. But some of the supposed relations of the soul to the body are incompatible with known facts. There exists nothing in man traceable either in its action or its essence, discoverable by the scalpel or discernible in the conduct of the living being, that is independent of or separate from the physical frame. There is no function of thought, will, emotion, that cannot be

stimulated, checked, impaired, destroyed by purely physical causes. Opium can with many persons intensify not merely the feelings but the power of the intellect, can excite the mind to feats beyond its ordinary strength, while it at the same time impairs the force of the will; and if permanently and habitually employed, permanently affects in many instances even the moral sense itself. The whole character, intellectual and moral, may be changed, perverted, stupefied by a blow on the head—has actually been changed by such a blow, sending a small splinter of bone into the brain—and has, after years of perversion, been changed once more by the trephine.\* It is impossible to mention a faculty of the supposed soul that is not demonstrably just as much under the control of adequate physical influences as are the skin, the liver, and the stomach. It seems impossible to believe in a soul so completely independent of the body that it can survive the dissolution of its material dwelling, and yet so absolutely identified with the body that a material agent capable of acting on and through the bodily tissues can control, modify, temporarily silence or even utterly extinguish the soul's every power and property. Spiritualists reply that it is not the soul that is affected, but only its power of manifesting itself

\* The case to which Sterne here alluded has a double aspect. The victim seemed to suffer much from his own perverted nature and affections, and was susceptible to one personal influence for good during his moral alienation. And, as the operation seems to have restored his moral character as it was before the injury, it might be argued that that character really subsisted throughout, underlying the manifestations of the injured brain. But were not the peculiarities of this case due to the fact that the brain-injury was merely local? And if the trephine had not been employed?



through the brain. This answer might hold good if physical agencies could only stupefy the man, hinder his thought, or prevent him from giving effect to that thought in speech, writing, or action. But in reality they can do very much more. They can actually so affect every single power or faculty assigned by Spiritualists to the soul apart from the body as to pervert and turn out of their natural direction all its functions, from the lowest to the highest; can even turn a good nature into a bad one. It would not be easy for any one acquainted with idiots and imbeciles to believe that behind and within the deficient deformed or paralysed brain there was a conscious self aware of its own being, thinking soundly and wishing to act wisely, but unable to give effect to its will through an impaired physical machinery. No one, I say, who had seen much of either idiocy or dementia (I do not mean insanity) in their actual operation could believe this. The idiot or imbecile has evidently no thought or will struggling against the stupidity and weakness manifest to others in his outward action. This fact alone would suffice to make the separate existence of a soul within the body most improbable. But when you find that this soul itself—that is to say, every function or power which Spiritualists ascribe to it—can be not merely suppressed but misdirected by agencies acting on and through the body, the idea of such an inward spiritual self, whereof the physical frame is a mere garment, becomes utterly absurd and is directly contradicted by the facts. Thus then it is perfectly correct to say that all physical evidence leads us not merely to ignore the supposed soul, not merely to deny that any proof of its

reality or probability can be assigned, but positively and peremptorily to disbelieve in its existence, and to affirm that the mind with all its faculties—nay, the very self, the conscious *ego*—is but the operation or function of the brain, the effect of the brain machinery in action under the stimulus probably of some force akin to electricity, whether generated in the cells of the brain or otherwise. With the cessation of this action, the decline and gradual extinction of the motive power that produces it, the mind ceases; the vital forces die out, all the animal functions come to an end, consciousness is extinguished, that change which we call death takes place, and—the chemical forces regaining absolute supremacy—the body is slowly resolved into its original elements. Thus the physical evidences disprove immortality by disproving the existence of that which is supposed to survive the death of the body.”

“I do not know,” said Cleveland, “that your argument, strong as it is, can fairly be said to *disprove* the existence of a soul apart from the body. It certainly renders that separate existence very improbable. The truth is that the spiritualistic and materialistic arguments scarcely meet each other, except at the one point you have noted; the question whether matter be capable of thought. Here certainly the Spiritualists would *prima facie* seem to have the best of it. But if matter be not capable of thought, then since the higher animals certainly think they must, it would seem, possess some sort of soul. I have only heard one answer to this objection, and it is worth consideration. Some disciples of Swedenborg affirm that the whole physical

universe is pervaded and in a sense sustained by spiritual forces ; in fact that spirit is the reality (the 'substance' or *noumenon* of the school-men) while matter is merely the clothing or phenomenon. Now it has been suggested that the essential distinction between man and the animal world, and again between higher and lower animals, is the degree of individuality they severally possess. It is conceivable that the animals, from the highest and most thoroughly educated of dogs or elephants down to the limpet, may be animated by a portion of the spirit-life pervading the material universe, which enables them to think such thought as is necessary for their several functions and spheres of action, but is not individualized sufficiently to prevent its return after their death to the general store of spiritual force. Man, on the other hand, receives from the same store at birth, or probably long before birth, a certain portion of spiritual life or force ; but his far greater individuality—the conscious personality that pervades his existence, action, thought, his sense of moral responsibility—so individualize this portion of spirit as to constitute it permanently into a distinct spiritual personality, a several soul, a separate *ego* incapable of reabsorption into the general store of spirit force. Imperfectly acquainted as I am with the views of this class of thinkers, I no doubt have imperfectly represented them. But I am bound to say that this theory, or something like it, seems to me the only hypothesis by which it is possible to reconcile belief in a soul whereof this body is the mere garment with known physical phenomena and with the facts of natural life—especially with that graduation of intelligent

being, from a Shakspeare down to a Bushman or Digger Indian, and again from the Digger Indian to his dog, and from the dog to the entozoon or tapeworm, which makes it all but impossible to draw at any point a line, of demarcation between the soul-gifted and the soulless."

"I might grant," rejoined Sterne—"if I cared to distinguish between the different degrees of unsoundness and absurdity in a hypothesis which seems to me essentially baseless—that of all spiritualistic theories that which you have just described is the least untenable. But I can see no reason why sensible and practical men should trouble themselves to entertain the question of spiritual existence at all, seeing how directly in its every form it conflicts with the known facts of physiology, and with the irresistible evidence going to prove that physical agencies control absolutely life moral and intellectual."

"I have," said Cleveland, "given you one reason—though I grant it has little weight with the great majority even of firm believers in a soul and a future life—which compels me to regard the question as having two sides; I mean the all but universal belief not merely in a soul and a future but in the reappearance of the dead, and the strong testimony to such reappearance which age after age has furnished. There is, however, another argument which has some weight with me, and which has still greater weight with others, generally in proportion to their moral excellence and religious earnestness. I feel, and those to whom I refer feel yet more strongly, an irresistible conviction that there is a God, and a God who listens to us when we pray: a

God who guides the fate of each individual as directly and clearly as the fate of nations or the course of stars and planets. I believe that the existence of a Creative Intelligence might be logically demonstrated, when once it is conceded that the world has not existed eternally in its present form. I believe that even the Darwinian scheme of development can only be reconciled to facts by importing into it an intelligent direction, causing variation to take a particular course, and preventing that extinction of incipient varieties through the force of intercrossing which, were the matter left to chance, would certainly occur. We can argue this point at another time if you wish it. For the present I only ask you to understand that I, and many more at least as free from prejudice and bigotry as myself,—among them one or two friends of mine who have been Atheists—do firmly believe not merely in a Creator but in a Providence; not merely in a general but in a special Providence. A careful study of history impresses me and many others with an equally strong conviction that the course of human progress is directed by an Intelligence infinitely superior to that of any man or of all mankind, which uses races and individuals as its instruments. Going further, coming down to our own individual experiences, we believe that in our own lives we trace distinct Providential government. The longer we live, the more closely we examine our own motives and acts and the consequences they entail, the more clearly do we discern an overruling power guiding most of our loyally-meant unselfish actions—even when they seem to involve great and permanent sacrifices—to ends whereof we had not dreamt, and making every cowardly vicious

selfish action the cause of ultimate punishment. We feel that our lives are in very truth from the cradle to extreme old age an educational process. What use in this education, if where it ends we end also? We are kept in school till nightfall, and our lessons are never completed till we pass out into the utter darkness. We have no opportunity here of putting to use a tithe of the experience bought with so much suffering: can see no possible earthly result adequate to the misery we have undergone while grappling with tasks too heavy for our strength. Our best qualities, our worthiest actions, have directly contributed to our anguish; we have been wretched just in proportion as strong affections, generous impulses, and ill-requited loyalty have left us defenceless with quivering nerves and shattered spirits at the mercy of those we have trusted too fully, forgiven too easily or loved too deeply and too long. Nature, we are told, is cruel. I doubt it. I incline to hope that on the whole every life save that of Man is happy while it lasts, and that death is generally as painless as it well can be. How then if Man's life be, like that of the lower animals, confined to some few years upon this earth, can we account for the misery that so often attends it, for the moral and physical suffering that infests it, for the horror of death as annihilation that overhangs it as a cloud of gloom and fear, never long absent from our thoughts and dulling our brightest as it throws a darker shade over our saddest hours? If man be not immortal, the Creator—whom many of us regard not merely as Ruler but as Father—has dealt most hardly with His finest and most sensitive creatures. He inflicts on them a severe, a strict, a painful

discipline which, if life ends for ever at seventy or eighty, is in truth thrown away. A friend whose life has been far less happy than my own—whose existence has been from childhood tormented by almost incessant ill-health and overshadowed by constantly darkening clouds of sorrow and anxiety—said to me the other day, ‘I do think that I ought to have leave to go back again over my life with the experience I have gained in it. Otherwise, though I acknowledge fully the justice of every punishment I have received, though I admit that I have not suffered more than I deserve, I cannot understand the dealing of Providence with myself or with others. I do not punish my children for any fault, however grave, merely because they have done wrong. I would not punish at all were it not necessary to cure by punishment fault which if uncured would bring down heavier penalties later in life. How can I suppose that my Father in Heaven deals less kindly and tenderly with His children than we short-sighted, impatient, irritable mortals with ours?’ The argument for immortality is moral and religious; the argument against it is physical and practical; and it is exceedingly difficult to bring the two into relation so far as to balance the one against the other. They are in fact essentially incommensurable; and hence the perplexity, the sadness, the doubt of all who have sufficient trust in science to appreciate the one class of reasonings and sufficient faith in the truth of human instincts and the consistency that pervades the order of the universe to apprehend the other.”

“Since,” replied Sterne, “I do not believe in a Creative Intelligence, and still less in an overruling Providence—least of all in that special Providence, as it is called, of which you seem so fully assured—I find no difficulty in the matter. But even from your own standpoint I do not think your argument has the weight you would give to it. The existence of evil, if it do not conflict altogether with the idea of a Divine Fatherhood, at least proves that if there be a Creator and Ruler of the Universe He worked and works under conditions. If He be not a *roi fainéant*, He is certainly not an absolute autocrat. He may be infinite, but assuredly He is not unconditioned. He allows throughout nature much more suffering and evil than you are willing to admit. You say that the lives of animals are happy. I say that they live in constant terror; as is proved by their incessant vigilance, by their eager listening for sounds that indicate peril, by the care with which social animals plant sentries to guard the flock when feeding or resting. Grant that the suffering is as little as was possible, consistently with that law of progress through the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, which you recognize almost as fully as I do; still the Creator of your conception was evidently compelled by some force He could not resist to allow of great evil and terrible suffering. Nay more, He is compelled in human existence to permit not merely suffering but sin. In human history as in animal life He develops a few magnificent specimens, a few splendid races, at the expense of lavish destruction and incalculable misery, and through ages of darkness and slaughter,



Why suppose that mortality cannot be among the essential conditions of His work? How can you tell that He *could* have made men other than they are, even if they be utterly and absolutely mortal, even if their existence be necessarily limited to <sup>o</sup>some seventy or eighty years?"

"What," said Mrs. Dalway, "could possibly impose such a condition upon Him?"

"Well," replied Sterne, "I have not cared to study a problem in whose essential and primary assumption I disbelieve. But it is at least conceivable that the supposed Creator of this world and of the visible Universe might not be the Supreme Being, but a subject of some higher Powers of whose character we know nothing: not even the little Cleveland supposes himself to gather from external nature, and from his own moral experience, respecting the immediate Author of both. The Demiurgus may have been forbidden by these higher Powers to create immortal intelligent creatures; lest, being immortal, being improvable, and having therefore the capacity, the time, and perhaps the strong and permanent desire for indefinite progress and elevation, they should become too wise and too powerful; lest they should in one word approach dangerously near to the nature and powers of Deity itself."

"Of course," said Cleveland, "anything is conceivable when we are attempting to reason respecting Beings of whom we can know little more, perhaps even less, than a flea knows of a man, and respecting conditions to us necessarily insoluble and incomprehensible. But if there be one solution of the insoluble

which seems to me more utterly preposterous, more certainly false than any other, it is that you have just propounded. The distance, moral and intellectual, between the Creator and Ruler of this world and His highest creature, the interval between the noblest of men and God, is such that the distance between the sea-weed and man is absolutely lost in comparison therewith; as the diameter of the earth's orbit, seen from the distance of Sirius, dwindles to a mathematical point and becomes utterly imperceptible. Darwin supposes that in infinite ages Man has by natural laws been developed out of something lower than a sea-weed. This is perhaps possible, may conceivably be true; but that in any infinity of ages man should approach even as near to Deity as the sea-weed is to Man I hold to be simply, absolutely, ludicrously impossible. The supposed Supreme Rulers who could entertain the remotest fear of such an approach and consequently impose precautionary measures upon the Demiurgus, must be so utterly silly that their mere want of sense would deprive them of the supposed supreme power with which your hypothesis endows them."

"The humility," rejoined Sterne, "which you express and doubtless feel on your own behalf and that of humanity in general, may be becoming and wholesome, but it is scarcely logical. The capacity of indefinite unlimited moral and intellectual progress in a being endowed with immortality, necessarily and logically involves the power of reaching any conceivable point of perfection—even that of Deity itself."

"You are," replied Cleveland, "a much better mathematician than I; yet I should have thought that even mathematical knowledge so limited as mine would have suggested the fallacy that taints and invalidates your argument. No reasonings drawn from the finite hold good when applied to the infinite. An infinite series of infinitesimal steps may have a finite limit—the integral calculus may be called, surely, 'the science of the finite limits of infinite series of infinitesimals.' Now as compared with the distance between creature and Creator every step of human progress is infinitesimal; and you might multiply these infinitesimals by infinity without necessarily bringing the result beyond a point distinctly finite. Of course we cannot in the absence of data say what the result would be; but we may still be very sure that it would leave us practically as far short of Divine power and perfection as at present. I should like, before we close this discussion, to mention one other argument in favour of immortality which has great weight with those who accept its basis. Most religious men and women believe in the reality of at least occasional personal communion with the Divine—whether with the Saviour or the Father. To any one so believing it seems impossible that such communion should be interrupted for ever by death. If man became attached to an animal, he would fain exempt that animal from death. It would be difficult even for man to love an ephemerid. It is therefore impossible to those who feel the reality of their own communion with God to believe in their own mortality. They cannot suppose that He enters into

any personal relations, however distant, with a merely ephemeral being."

"I admit to the full," returned Sterne, "the sincerity of the belief to which you refer, and if I could admit its truth I could hardly challenge the inference you draw from it. I have met some persons unquestionably conscious of communion with a *non-ego* always within reach, and of whose presence they were always more or less conscious; conscious sometimes clearly, sometimes dimly. I should be greatly puzzled to account for such a conscious experience in so many differing natures on the basis of sheer illusion. But I have observed closely the phenomena of my own consciousness and I have questioned closely friends more exceptionally constituted than myself. I have through such study and questions learned to apprehend that, in many individuals of exceptional nervous constitution, that duality of the brain which exists in us all is so strongly marked that it seems almost to amount to a dual or double personality. One moiety of the brain in these cases appears to be exclusively concerned in the ordinary functions of life, thought, and action. In a word, this half alone—generally the left half, which commands the right limbs—is the seat of the active self, the conscious personality. Yet there remains ever present, though not generally active, the other distinct moiety or secondary brain—perhaps by its very inactivity calmer, colder, more judicial—which every now and then interferes to check criticise and control that operative moiety of the brain which does the daily work of life and with which the individual identifies his conscious self. This second brain then seems to

him when suddenly so intervening a distinct individual, a *non-ego*. Such a constitution was, on my hypothesis, that of Socrates; and his 'Dæmon' was in that case only the less active and therefore calmer half of his powerful brain. This constitution I suspect to be that of all religious mystics, and more or less of all those who believe themselves to hold communion of any kind with invisible spiritual persons, Divine or otherwise. I conjecture, then, that the Dæmon—the Providence, the prayer-answering God, the external conscience, the invisible protector, the guardian angel, call it what you will, of which exceptional natures in every age have been conscious—is, not indeed exactly an illusion, but the creation of a double consciousness not recognised as such; is in fact the second half of a brain whose first half alone is under ordinary circumstances consciously active."

"That is possible," said Cleveland. "The one argument against such an explanation which strikes me at first sight is the utter distinctness and diversity of character between the two halves of the same brain—nourished in and through the same body and controlled from the first to the last moment of existence by the same physical influences—which your theory requires. It seems to me that while the two halves may differ in power, in activity, and to some extent in quality—so that the less active may be nevertheless the stronger calmer and wiser—they must of necessity resemble one another so closely that the second could never be mistaken by the first for a separate and entirely unlike individuality. The person with whom religious people especially believe themselves to be in communion is not

a second self, but something infinitely better and wiser than themselves."

"I do not pretend," replied Sterne, "to give a complete or coherent account of what is at best a probable hypothesis based on a doctrine as yet so ill-defined, so imperfectly mastered, so beset on all sides with unsolved problems and uncertain limitations, as Wigan's theory of the duality of the brain. If it be accepted by the best authorities, they seem to interpret and define it very variously; and I have no intention of committing myself on ground so dubious. I meant to suggest one among the possible explanations of a peculiar 'phenomenon of consciousness' in order to dispel the mystical inferences of those who experience it by showing that it allowed of a purely natural interpretation; not to insist that my suggestion was correct. But I think it at least likely that—in the very exceptional cases of which alone I speak—the two halves of the brain are in fact representative of two distinct personalities; severally generated by the several parents. If it be true that the less active brain is the wiser and better, the distinction of personal character between what I may call the conscious and the non-conscious self may perhaps be explained by supposing that the active excitable brain comes from one parent, the slower and calmer brain from the other; and hence possibly an original distinction of character so marked as to conceal whatever of identity or close resemblance the similar conditions inseparable from relation with and nourishment by the same body may cause or enforce."

At this point we were rejoined by Mrs. Cleveland and Gerard, who were accompanied by Vere. When

the ladies left us to prepare for the early dinner which, out of consideration to the servants, was the Sunday custom of Cleveland's house, our host observed to the clergyman :

"We have been discussing this morning a topic certainly appropriate to the day; the question of human immortality in some of its scientific and again in some of its moral or metaphysical aspects. Fortunately for ourselves—since none of us are qualified at once by knowledge and by conviction to take the affirmative side in such a controversy—we have not dwelt, I may say we have not touched, on the Scriptural relations of the question. You always have the unfair advantage of the pulpit, which exempts you from reply. But even on those very unequal conditions I should like to hear you, and still more that our friends should hear you, explain those views regarding the Resurrection of which I have, after years of intimate acquaintance with you, but a vague conception."

"I am conscious," said Vere, "that the privilege of the pulpit is provoking to thoughtful laymen; who could often enlighten the clergymen much more—at least on some of the problems whether of practical life or of so-called philosophy involved in his argument—than he can enlighten them. I grant to the full all that has been said, whether by infidel satirists or by gentler humorists, on the pretentious absurdity of too many controversial discourses addressed by young and imperfectly informed clergymen to a congregation containing perhaps a dozen or more hearers well qualified both by age, reading, and thought, either to bewilder or instruct a whole class of such preachers. Even as

regards the simpler questions of morals and religion—the temptations, difficulties and perplexities of practical life, and those plain duties which we are apt rather to neglect than to misconceive—I cannot but acknowledge the reasonableness of Mr. Trollope's criticism, when he expresses his wonder at the audacity of young men fresh from College in venturing to speak in a tone of authoritative advice to those who, however little education they may have derived from books, are by the mere experience of life often far wiser on such points than their official instructor. When myself a very young preacher I was always disposed to confine myself in the pulpit as much as possible to the precepts of the Gospel, and to illustrate or enforce them chiefly by historical example and by facts familiar alike to young and old; or else to deliver merely educational lectures, explaining and bringing home to my hearers the meaning of texts, laws, and narratives likely to be misunderstood by men and women whose experience and information were confined to English life. I always find that I learn in the course of a year from my elder parishioners quite as much as I can teach from the pulpit. But to return to that peculiarity of pulpit oratory on which you dwelt—the absence of reply—I think it a greater injury and misfortune to the clergyman than to the congregation. It is, I fear, a necessary evil. I hardly see how we could allow members of the congregation to reply to the sermon, unless indeed the sermon were separated as completely as are my afternoon lectures from the Service; and even then the discussion would be apt to degenerate into a squabble, and impair the usefulness and influence of the clergyman.



outside the church. But every man not very thoughtless or very conceited must be conscious how great is the disadvantage to which the soundness of his own mental tone and the efficacy of his arguments are exposed by that exemption from rejoinder which you—repeating for the moment the common-place of the satirist—treat as an unfair advantage. Unfortunately, not only are we not liable to immediate and public rejoinder, but we seldom hear our sermons criticized; least of all by our intellectual equals. If we hear any criticism at all, it is mostly from ignorant men or women possessed with the conceit of fancied knowledge, and is the criticism of theological prejudice or personal jealousy rather than of cool intellectual examination or practical experience. Consequently even the most careful and conscientious among us are tempted into slovenliness of thought and reasoning if not of expression. We are, moreover, despite all the care possible to fallible mortals, liable to exaggerate the force and convincing effect of our own favourite arguments, since we neither see them answered in print as you literary and political controversialists do, nor generally hear them canvassed in conversation. It seems now-a-days to be made a point of social courtesy not to discuss theological or religious questions, at least not to discuss them with freedom and frankness, in presence of the parson. I have often wished that it were possible to visit my parishioners in disguise, so that they might speak of me without knowing that they were speaking to me, and might, therefore, converse or argue with me simply as a man and scholar, not as clergyman."

“I should be sorry,” said Cleveland, “if you supposed the common-place I just now uttered to have any personal reference to you. Of all the speakers I have ever heard you are the least provocative, and of all clergymen, certainly the most candid and the least disposed consciously to take advantage of a position of authority. Nevertheless I confess that I never hear, even from you, a sermon on any question that interests me, however closely I may agree with you, without wishing to canvass particular points before you had time to pass on to others. I should like, for example, to challenge now and then your fundamental premises, or to insert a qualification, before you proceed to draw your inferences from them. At the same time I repeat that I should very much like to hear you discuss the question of immortality from the Scriptural standpoint, and especially the evidences and probable facts of the Resurrection as you see them, in presence of the friends with whom I have this morning discussed some of the extra-scriptural bearings of the former question.”

“Well then,” said Vere, “if you can make it convenient to attend my lecture this afternoon, I will read a discourse on that very subject which I have been preparing for some time past. It is not by any means complete or satisfactory to myself, and there are in it so many points upon which I feel somewhat doubtful—on which further enquiry might possibly modify my reasoning—that I had meant to keep it back probably for at least another year. I will only ask you to bear this acknowledgment of incompleteness in mind. For the generality of my hearers—since its defects

relate to points that would scarcely interest or affect them—it will probably be as wholesome in its present state as it would be could I reserve it till time and thought had matured it sufficiently to render it worthy of being submitted to the critical consideration of men like yourselves.”

At this moment we were summoned to dinner; and at dinner it was unanimously agreed that we should attend the parish Church at half-past three that afternoon. Mrs. Cleveland, who had already walked there and back, was to drive down with Mrs. Dalway. The men agreed to walk. Vere left us immediately after dinner, as he had duties to perform previous to the delivery of what he called a lecture, but what his parishioners were wont to describe as his afternoon sermon.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*VERE'S SERMON—THE FIRST EASTER.*

DURING our walk to the church Sterne remarked, "Men's character is so complicated, their conduct is often governed by such various, intricate and inexplicable motives, that I seldom feel surprised or puzzled by finding any man, however highminded or however wise, in a position the most inconsistent illogical or incongruous. At any rate, I seldom trouble myself even to ponder how the fly got into the amber. But of all brilliant flies imbedded in the most worthless lumps of clouded amber, no human insect ever seemed to me so utterly out of place as Vere. He was so successful at college that he could hardly have taken to the Church in despair or doubt of earning a living, or much more than a living, in one of the lucrative professions. His sermons are often thoughtful, seldom wanting in lucidity of expression, and frequently contain real novelty of view upon matters of general interest; and, with some change in their form, many of them would be well paid for as Magazine articles. Even if, like many other very able men, he could not write that most remunerative and most worthless kind of so-called literature, the leading

articles of daily newspapers, he could certainly with less work than he gives to his sermons alone make a good income by his pen. I know however, having lived some few years in this parish, that his sermons, carefully as they are prepared, constitute a very small fraction of his work. They give me, moreover, the impression that he is not merely honourable in the ordinary sense,—far too honourable to imitate Colenso and other Broad-Churchmen and engage formally to defend a Creed he disbelieves, or but partially believes; or on the other hand to take pay for defending it and really assail it,—but, I should think, honest in the highest and most exceptional degree; honest in argument and loyal to truth even when revolving the most deeply interesting problems in the privacy of his own mind. I know how difficult it is not to let our wishes and sympathies bias our judgment when considering questions whose solution must affect our inner selves, our peace of heart and mind, as long as we live. It is easy to resist such a bias when it takes the gross form of worldly interest; then the difficulty of high-minded men is to avoid being biassed against their interest; but under the subtler influence of love and hope, of early education, of felt spiritual needs, the intellect is very apt to hold the balance awry. I know not a few Secularists who are obviously though unconsciously incapacitated for impartial study of these logical questions by bitter recollections of an Evangelical training; and one or two whose personal experience of Christian professions has inspired a rooted hatred and contempt for Christianity. Extreme reluctance to forego the consolations of a firm faith in

Providence and an assured hope beyond the grave must close innumerable minds against all arguments not absolutely decisive that would shake the basis of either. If there be a man capable of forgetting all in a single-minded anxiety to see and speak the truth, I should take Vere to be such a man. I cannot comprehend why such a man should have entered the Church, or having entered it—perhaps because he had not at four-and-twenty thoroughly considered the fundamental principles of its creed—how he can care to remain there. Pecuniarily, as I said, he must know that he is a loser; and yet I cannot understand his entering and remaining in the Church from sincere belief in its doctrine and conviction that he could do more good in that way than in any other. Such acts of self-devotion are infrequent; but still not by any means unheard of or inexplicable on the part of very young men; though clever men as a rule either rise in the Church or leave it. But why Vere should have continued all these years to profess doctrines which no man of such clear and logical intelligence—so versed as he is not merely in technical theology but in the fundamental controversies of the day—can really accept save in a non-natural sense, while he loses heavily in income and repute by adhering to them, is to me incomprehensible."

"Infidels," replied Cleveland—"to use a discourteous but brief and well-understood party term—are generally the most extravagant and stubborn of bigots. No Inquisitor was ever more deeply and arrogantly convinced, not only that his own views were true but that no man could honestly doubt their truth, than are the great

majority of sceptical critics and scientific Materialists. Mr. Holyoake is almost the only exception I ever knew, even among the more experienced, candid and thoughtful unbelievers. I well remember the surprise with which I heard a clerical convert to Pyrrhonism coolly declare that no clergyman of ordinary intelligence could be sincere. I was then young enough to meet such an imputation by what after all was its logical answer—the *argumentum ad hominem*, and to think it strange when that home-thrust was answered by a burst of anger. I knew the infidel character somewhat better, but had sufficient faith in the liberalizing tendencies of culture and intellectual society to be equally startled, when one of the ablest aspirants of my own age—perhaps the most scholarly of Oxford Radicals and since a leader in his profession—denounce a rising statesman, now among the foremost and most respected of public men, as insincere ‘because he is far too clever and well-informed’ to be the devout Churchman and thorough Tory he affects to seem.’ My Oxonian friend has learned truer and more tolerant wisdom from the experience of practical life; but nearly all those sceptics who have taken part in theological or scientific controversy remain at fifty as unreasonable, as unjust, as confidently persuaded of their own infallibility and the insincerity of their opponents as they were at five-and-twenty. You share—pardon me for saying so—the stubborn party-zeal of Inquisitors and the intolerant egotism of dissenting preachers: together with an incapacity to learn or unlearn worthy of French Legitimists or Red Republicans. Vere thoroughly believes in the creed of the Church as he loyally interprets it.

To him the next world is at least as real as the present ; and his Heaven and Hell are not indeed those of Calvinism, but those of Scripture as Scriptural phraseology should be read in the light of Oriental metaphor. He believes that through the agency of earnest and devout clergymen a few souls in each parish which if left to themselves would, so far as human judgment can see, go hopelessly astray, may be directed on the road to Heaven. He, like very few other men, practically accepts the logical consequences of this belief, and unselfishly acts up to it. He thinks it well worth the sacrifice of any possible renown, the devotion of a lifetime, the abnegation of every earthly advantage, of every personal enjoyment, to save for eternity the happiness of one or two of those fellow-Christians for whose sake the Master whom he regards as Divine died upon the cross. Such consistency is very rare ; but it is infinitely more logical and reasonable than the conduct of ordinary Christians or even of ordinary Materialists. And the more profoundly thoughtful and more clearsighted the man is, the more natural is it that he should be true to his own convictions, and square his conduct to his Creed."

"But," said Sterne, "how *can* he believe his creed ? Take the one point to which you have just alluded : the doctrine of the Atonement. That doctrine is not merely illogical and therefore (as I should have supposed) incredible to a man of Vere's intellect, but blasphemous and revolting, and therefore (as I should have supposed) intolerable to a man of the loving nature and profound religious devotion you ascribe to him, and probably—from my distant experience of his



character—ascibe to him with perfect truth. Put into plain words—as surely he would put it in the privacy of his own mind—it is the most horrible and offensive nonsense ever promulgated by a religious leader, or even by a professional theologian; though professional theologians in pressing their conclusions display a calmer contentment with utter and absolute nonsense and a sterner indifference to glaring immorality than any other class of rational beings. The doctrine of the Atonement is briefly this. The Father, with absolute power and absolute foreknowledge, created man, knowing and intending that man should fall into sin, knowing and intending that sin should condemn endless generations perfectly innocent of that original fault,—nay babies and children innocent of all fault,—to eternal and unspeakable torment. The Son, being from eternity in relation with the Father more intimate than we can conceive, allowed and acquiesced in it if He were not the agent of this monstrous cruelty; yet at a later period deliberately chose to take upon Himself the responsibility and punishment of human sin in order to save—not all mankind but—a select few. He left to the merciless iniquity of the Creator all the countless generations between Adam and Augustus. He left to the same cruelty all who should not hear of His sacrifice, or should not be able to apprehend its meaning and value. Yet “He so loved” the few that He was willing to die in torment for them. The Father, who had no scruple in condemning thousands of millions to eternal and unutterable torture for faults they could not avoid, yet scrupled to spare even a few unless the metaphorical “demands” of some impersonal personi-

fied Justice could be satisfied by the death of His Son in place of those who were to be exempted from the general doom of their species. It is intelligible that men so saved should regard their Saviour with profound affection and personal gratitude, illogical as was His conduct and arbitrary as were the conditions by which its benefit was limited to them. But they, and all others who at any period of their eternal future may learn the story, in proportion as they appreciate and are thankful for the sacrifice of the Son, must regard the Father with horror and hatred. If they worship Him, it must be as savages worship the Devil, in order to dissuade Him from hurting them. Indeed, such a Deity is not morally distinguishable from the Devil of tradition, unless by His far greater wickedness; seeing that the Devil only endeavours to ruin those for whose existence he is nowise responsible."

Dalway, though by no means an orthodox devotee or a scrupulous formalist, stood aghast at the plainness of this statement. Cleveland listened to it with perfect coolness: and presently answered with the calm indifference of a philosopher debating some abstract question respecting the *summum bonum* or the primary basis of morals.

"As a profound believer in the perfect goodness and wisdom of the Creator," he replied, "I regard the vulgar (or orthodox) doctrine of the Atonement very much as you do; though with a passionate abhorrence that you cannot share. To you it is simply a revolting fancy, fictitious in all its parts. To me, it is a libel on the Being whom I regard with unspeakable reverence and gratitude; imputing to Him atrocities at which Attila

or Tiberius would stand aghast. But of course such is not the view of the 'Atonement' entertained by thoughtful men—I might say by any man outside of some narrow bigoted and utterly selfish Calvinistic sects. That hideous blasphemy nowhere coincides with the faith held by Churchmen like Vere on one hand, or by independent intelligent believers—*e.g.*, Unitarians and Swedenborgians—on the other. Nay, it does not represent the idea of those who developed the original theory. Of course those ancient theologians very imperfectly understood their own thought, and never fairly or clearly worked out their meaning. Had they done so, even they must have seen in it not a few signal and fatal inconsistencies. But that original idea was apparently—to put it in language as plain as your own—something like this. The Son, and not the Father, was the Creator of this world and of the human species. Most probably, when proposing to create a race of responsible moral immortal beings, with whom He might feel sympathy and in whom He could take personal interest, He consulted His Father. He was doubtless told that He would make a mess of the work—that the conditions hardly allowed of success. He tried nevertheless, and failed. He found that His attempt promised to result in the misery on earth of His favourite creatures, and in their eternal suffering after death. Naturally and righteously dismayed at this prospect, He again appealed to the unimpassioned immovable Fate-like wisdom of the Father. The latter must be supposed to have answered something to the following purport. 'The Eternal Laws of the Cosmos do not permit that sin should go unpunished, or that a race like that you have

created should be held irresponsible. A terrible fault has been committed; a terrible atonement must be made for it. If mankind be left to themselves, the inviolable principles which govern the moral as well as the physical Order, linking cause and consequence in a chain incapable of severance or rupture, ensure that creatures essentially and immortally sinful shall procreate children similarly constituted from generation to generation, and that all shall be eternally and utterly miserable.' Sinfulness involves misery as its inevitable and inseparable consequence. You and you alone, as the original author of the mischief on the one hand, and as a Deity with infinite capacity of suffering on the other, can if you will make that payment for the sinfulness of your creatures and the failure of your own work which is due to destiny and to abstract justice. You may save the children of your Adam, but only by becoming one of them, while retaining the infinite nature of Deity with its infinite capacity of pain—of which indeed you cannot divest yourself. You must bear in your own person the penalty due to all your human dependants. You must endure that death which is their inevitable lot; and having done so, you will have made payment in full, and may retrieve the error you have committed, with all its terrible consequences to these creatures of yours in whom you seem so deeply interested.' The Son accepted the conditions and paid the forfeit, and from that moment enjoyed the right to repair the consequences of the original mistake, and to save all who chose to be saved through the means thus rendered available."

"But," said Sterne, "you cannot mean to attribute

such an extraordinary theory to the educated Churchmen of the present day; and least of all to a man like Vere, incapable at once of the inconsistency and the impiety involved in such a notion?"

"Of course not," answered Cleveland. "The idea I have roughly sketched out was set forth by a well-known heresiarch of the day, in a conversation I had with him not long since. Of course it was not his belief; but he was inclined to regard it as approximating in all likelihood very closely to the original. Of course it can only have been very imperfectly and vaguely presented in its entirety, even to the minds that first gave it form and coherence by combining what they saw of actual human conditions with what seemed to them the necessary justice of a Deity and the logic of destiny. I will not attempt to sketch, however roughly, the various interpretations of the Atonement entertained by Christian thinkers at the present day. I will only mention one view held, I believe, by some disciples of Swedenborg, and perhaps by Swedenborg himself, which, however, is an explanation rather of the Incarnation than of the Sacrifice. They say that in the time of Augustus, as in that of the Flood, the wickedness of mankind had become so great and general that the influx into earthly life of that spiritual emanation from the inner world by which material existence is sustained, and on which human life is especially dependent, had been dangerously diminished and was likely to be cut off. To restore the free circulation of this essential inner life, the free communication of spiritual influences to the world, and especially to human nature, the Lord—

for they know no God but Jesus Christ—consented or chose to come down to earth in person; and, by becoming Himself a member of the human race, to bring its members, wherever existing, once more into relations with the spiritual Cosmos. Remember that the word atonement properly means reconciliation. In this etymological meaning of the phrase you have the key to the least exceptionable and incredible among the various interpretations placed upon the doctrine by most if not all of its more intelligent and reasonable adherents. They consider that Christ lived and died as man, not to pay a penalty imposed on mankind by some abstract Power behind the Throne of God Himself—nor yet to reconcile the Deity to His creatures, from whom He could not be estranged by the weaknesses and sins of a nature He perfectly understood—but rather to reconcile the creature to his Creator. Experience had shown how difficult it was for man to apprehend in any useful sense the idea of personal relations to a Creator unknown, invisible, intelligible only through a Creation full of perplexities and apparent contradictions. Philosophers might appreciate with awe the evidences of infinite Wisdom and Power; enthusiasts might catch rare and partial glimpses of His reflection in the conscience; but for the ordinary man—for mankind present or future—the abstract truth was unavailing. He who said ‘Be Light, and Light was’ was lost to the sight of hard-worked hardly-used men, of simple, sad, humble women, in the intolerable splendour of the glory that surrounded the Throne. Even the countrymen of David and Isaiah had made of Jehovah a Deity less divine, less

just, less attractive than Elohim: the God of Jacob was no longer the God of Japhet, hardly even the God of Abraham. The Incarnation offered to the weakness of humanity an Image of the Divine in its most human aspect: a Son through whose brotherhood with men the Fatherhood of God could be brought home to our hearts, as His Kingship to our intellect. And for this view of Christ's person and purpose this much at least may be said; that it is from Him and through Him—it is only since He lived and died—that those who confess and those who deny Him have learnt the idea which brings earth within sight and hearing of Paradise—the only conception of God which can raise, strengthen, or comfort Man—the name of Our Father which is in Heaven. The Atonement, according to its latest and most rational interpreters, may have been needed to render relations between the Divine and human once more possible: the Incarnation offered to human worship an Image of the Deity so humanized that it appealed most forcibly to those whose human affections and imagination were least able to apprehend and put faith in the comparative abstraction of Creative Wisdom—the Infinite, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Invisible.”

By this time we had reached the church. The congregation was a small one, consisting in exceptionally large proportion of men. Of the few gentlemen of education and intelligence whom the beauty of the local scenery had induced to settle in the place, nearly all were present; and with them perhaps a score of the yeomanry, or as they are there called ‘statesmen,’ farming their own hereditary lands; a class

extinct elsewhere, but still to be found in considerable number among the Cumbrian hills. They give to the character and social relations of that country a peculiar tone—an independence of bearing perfectly divested of insolence or self-assertion among the middle class, and a freedom from assumption and dictation on the part of the higher—not common in any of those districts of rural England wherein the squire and the parson are absolute, and the farmers, whether leaseholders or tenants-at-will, largely dependent on the favour of their landlords. These last, manly as is their spirit, sincere as is their attachment to their natural leaders, have not that tradition of perfect social freedom, that family pride in an inheritance and a name as old as those of the Percies and the Grahams, which give the peasant of the Border counties a position too secure to need the shadow of self-assertion. I noted the presence of one stalwart old “heritor,” as he would be called beyond the Solway, whose lineal ancestor, holding the self-same acres, was among the English archery cut down by Randolph’s cavalry at Bannockburn; and a younger acquaintance whose “forbears” took part in the “Pilgrimage of Grace,” and were duly hanged by the Royal Tiger; but, having left the heir of the house at home, preserved the lands and the still extant dwelling they held so much dearer than life or limb.

We had but taken our seats and disposed of our *impedimenta* when Vere entered the reading-desk and there read one or two collects and prayers selected from the Liturgy; the regular Evening Service being reserved for a later hour. Then, ascending the pulpit,



and opening his manuscript—it was his practice on all occasions except in these afternoon Lectures to preach extempore—he read his text from the fifteenth chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians:—“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain.”

“The tendencies of the present age,” he said, “impose upon the clergy a duty, I may say a necessity, such as has not been so manifestly laid and urged upon them by the conditions of any former period, since the conversion of Constantine: I might almost add since the days in which St. Paul dwelt so strongly on the truth enunciated in this text. We are challenged and enforced to defend the fundamental principles, to set forth in argument and bring home to our hearers the essential evidences, of the Christian Faith. It is not merely that the very foundations of Christianity are attacked by sceptical assailants of great intellectual skill, of profound learning, and of unquestionable honesty. Such men have made such attacks in every age when it has been possible for them to do so without imperilling their lives. Some of them have at other times, and in countries where Christian bigotry has been most rampant and most powerful, endured torture and death for their disbelief with a courage and conscientiousness well worthy of comparison with those displayed by *our* ‘noble army of Martyrs’ whose testimony to their Christian belief was given from the stake or in the arena, whose blood has been the seed of the Church. But when the offensive in this strife of opposite convictions is assumed only by individuals fighting an uphill battle against the assured and accepted faith, hereditary or personal, of a believing

generation, the views of the assailants are commonly set forth in books which hardly reach the homes of Christians. The hostile arguments are then addressed chiefly if not exclusively to a specially studious minority. •They do not disturb the established ancestral faith of the Church, seldom seducing more than a few isolated and wavering members from her fold—and therefore the leaders and authorities of the Church have thought, probably with reason, that such assaults at such periods should not be answered or discussed from the pulpit. Like the wars of former days, the strife is waged by small regular armies, and only the complete and signal defeat of their professional defenders would bring its evils home to the untrained many. At such times and in such warfare it suffices to meet the enemy on their own ground and with their own weapons, to answer their books with books equally learned and likely to have a scarcely more extensive circulation. But we have fallen on other days. It almost seems as if the work of the Apostles might have to be done over again, without the special advantages they enjoyed, as eye-witnesses of the facts on which the evidences of the Faith, the foundations of the Christian creed are laid, and as companions of the Master Himself. When St. Paul addressed the Corinthians in the letter from which I have taken my text—a letter which was to all appearance the earliest of the now extant Christian writings, the first in date of those ecclesiastical records which have been preserved to our own time, and which are entered on the canon of the New Testament—he was preaching Christianity and its paramount doctrines—the Resurrection of its

Founder and the future Life as proven by that Resurrection—to an incredulous world. He and the other Apostles whose work was more limited (apparently for the most part confined to the Jewish communities of Western Asia) and whose direct influence on the Church has consequently been far less than his, had to insist chiefly on the evidences miraculous and other of the truth they preached as attested by their own knowledge; because they had to establish that truth in the face of hostile opinion or of contemptuous indifference. It was from the Council of Nicæa until lately—save in exceptional instances—the task of their successors in the pastoral function to educate in an hereditary faith a people predisposed to hear them, or to enforce the moral lessons and the spiritual meaning of the Gospel by appeals to the recognized authority of Scripture and of the Church and to admitted historical truths. Within the last quarter of a century, however, scepticism has gained ground, especially among the more educated and thoughtful classes, with such alarming rapidity that it is no longer possible for a preacher to feel any confidence that he is addressing hearers with whom he stands on common ground; that few if any who listen to him are disposed to doubt or deny the very foundations of his teaching. I so far agree with the judgment expressed in former ages, and even within the memory of men now living, by the official chiefs of the Church and by her wisest and most judicious counsellors, that I studiously avoid, when addressing my parishioners at large, after our regular services, any reference that might suggest doubts and difficulties to minds which probably would not otherwise be disturbed

thereby. The principal duty of the clergy is still 'edification;' the building up in the minds and consciences of their hearers of a sound Christian character, a clear solid Christian faith; and such edification or building-up is impossible if it is to be interrupted by frequent probing of the foundation whereon it must rest. But it is equally impossible to construct any moral edifice on foundations not strongly and distinctly laid; impossible to form a Christian creed or a Christian character on the basis of assumptions consciously or unconsciously doubted by those whose spiritual nature is to be the subject of that instruction and elevation. Therefore it is that I confine myself at the regular services of the Church to the enforcement or application of her doctrines. Therefore also it is that I consider it my duty to take these special occasions of discussing in presence of those who are interested therein, or who have been disturbed thereby, the theological controversies of the age. All but the youngest among us can remember the time when in almost every society the truth of Christianity was taken for granted; when it would have been regarded as an affront had a speaker assumed the possibility that any of those with whom he was conversing so doubted any of the fundamental principles of our creed, that their right to the Christian name could be challenged without offence. But within the last twenty years, I might say almost within the last decennium, a great change has taken place in this respect. Among men at least, doctrines incompatible not merely with scriptural teachings but with the very bases of all religion are freely canvassed; and—whereas not long ago courtesy obliged each to assume that his

neighbour was a Christian—there now seems a growing tendency to take for granted that a man of science, or a man of critical culture and learning, is probably a doubter or a disbeliever. The upholders of the faith, whether bound to it by professional duty or influenced merely by deep personal conviction, are thrown on the defensive: have once more to deal, if not with an openly hostile world, yet with a growing hostility among men of especial cultivation—among the class of thinkers, scientific investigators, and historical students—not wholly unlike the feeling which prevailed among the disciples of the Porch, the Garden, and the Academy, when they first heard that a new worship, a new religion, was taught and was gaining ground, founded on the alleged revival and reappearance from the grave of a Jewish enthusiast, who had died upon the cross as a felon, or as a traitor to the Roman dominion. The contemptuous scepticism of the Platonists, the good-humoured ridicule of the Epicureans, the haughty intellectual indignation of the Stoics, are severally reproduced to-day among different classes and schools of the men who consider themselves and whom the world is disposed to recognize as intellectual leaders and guides.

“As when St. Paul wrote his first letter to his Corinthian disciples, so to-day, the Resurrection is the fundamental tenet of Christianity, the citadel of the faith, the point most obnoxious to hostile criticism, the point most essential to the very existence of the Church and of Christianity itself. It is the one miracle which can hardly be explained away, about which no compromise is possible, upon which believers and unbelievers are

necessarily brought to a distinct and direct issue; which must either be an absolute, unqualified, monstrous and almost unaccountable fiction, or a solemn vital all-important truth. The critics who have devoted all the knowledge acquired by the study of a lifetime, like Strauss—all the powers of a keen imagination sharpened by careful local examination and by extensive if not profound learning, like Renan,—to construct what may pass for a theory or an account of the life of Christ, without admitting either the reality of His alleged miracles, or even the historical fact of His pretension to work miracles, find themselves brought if not to a standstill yet to a very grave perplexity, before this paramount, positively affirmed, inexplicable miracle; attested as it is not merely by particular records but by the whole tenor of the scriptural narrative; by every word of the teaching of the Apostles, and above all by the life and history of the Apostolic Church. If, again, a man's faith in the actual literal truth of other miraculous stories be shaken, he may still remain in all essential points a Christian; may still recognise the authority of the Saviour; may still feel his whole life influenced and controlled by the impressive unequalled authority which the promise of immortality gives to Christ's teaching, and which rests ultimately and essentially on the proof of that immortality afforded by the resurrection of the Master Himself. But he who has once ceased to believe that Christ actually whether in the flesh or not rose from the dead, has to all intent and purpose ceased to be a Christian. It might be shown—though I do not believe that it can ever be shown, and though each year of deeper study more clearly con-

vinces me that it is not true—that we have no sufficient evidence for our belief that our Lord opened the eyes of the blind, or restored to life the dead or seemingly dead: we might find it difficult to answer the arguments, by which such sceptics as I have named seek to reduce the story of the loaves and fishes to the level of Heathen myths, representing it as a metaphor or as an exaggerated phrase misunderstood and turned into an alleged material fact and palpable fiction; and yet we might retain everything that is essential, not merely in the moral and spiritual teaching of Christ, but in the hope and the promise He has given us, and even in the theology which Councils and Fathers have elaborated out of the simple statements of the Gospels and Epistles. But if once our complete unhesitating belief that Christ actually rose from the dead—actually expired on the cross, was actually laid in the grave, and sometime afterwards actually appeared in person before His disciples—could be shaken or broken up by the arguments of adverse criticism, or by the growing reluctance of the age to believe in anything inconsistent with that regular course of nature whose invariability science in its fresh developments ever more and more peremptorily asserts—then indeed would our preaching be vain: then indeed would Christianity itself be lost, because nothing exclusively Christian would remain to us. We could build no Church on the moral precepts, of which probably very few were absolutely new or original, nor yet on the mere earthlife wherein these were incarnated and personified. That tremendous sanction which the hope of immortality gives to the commands of our Lord, and the seal which His own exceptional resurrection

sets upon that promise of immortality, would be gone for ever. Christianity stands or falls by the Resurrection, and by the Resurrection alone.

“I have said, and I repeat it, that the Resurrection cannot be explained away, after the fashion in which all the other miracles to which the Gospel narratives testify have been, to the satisfaction of sceptics, reduced to mere exaggeration, to moral parables mistaken for historic realities, or to simple fictions. For those miracles we have the testimony of one, two, three, or at least four separate accounts. It is possible that any one of these miraculous stories may be an interpolation. It is possible, again, that the several accounts may all have been derived from one original narrative, as some few very impartial writers seem now inclined to suppose; that there existed from a very early period certain *Memoirs of the Apostles*, from which at least the three first or so-called synoptical Gospels have been derived. But I do not think that any thoroughly candid and careful students, any sound and lucid thinkers versed in Scripture and Church history, will after full enquiry be disposed to listen seriously to any such explanation of the great central miracle of the faith. It is attested by every one of the Gospels. It is attested by the positive affirmation of St. Paul, in that which, as I have said, is probably the earliest extant Christian writing. St. Paul had most assuredly conversed on the subject often and earnestly with more than one alleged eye-witness of the fact, to whose testimony, in the chapter from which I have taken my text, he directly and personally appeals. If there were in being prior to the compilation or composition of the



earliest of the existing Gospels any such work as that whose priority is suspected as I have said by some careful enquirers—but whose utter disappearance, if it even existed, seems to me inexplicable and all but incredible—no candid man will venture to doubt that that work contained some account of the Resurrection not essentially different in its main features from that which we now possess. Above all things, it is certain that the Eleven believed during their whole after-lives that their Master had risen from the dead, and that they had since seen Him. This last and central fact of the story is perhaps the only one about which no cavil, no dispute is possible; against which no discrepancy of order or detail between the several accounts handed down to us has the slightest weight. This belief of the alleged eye-witnesses, if it were mere belief, would be a very grave, an almost conclusive testimony. It is without parallel in history, even in that history of human delusions which is so full of inexplicable marvels. There exists no record of a spectral illusion, admitted to be such, seen by three persons at once. I doubt whether the mere fact that a vision had been seen by two persons simultaneously—those persons not being twins, husband and wife, mesmerist and patient, or persons united by some other of those bonds of physical and moral sympathy which are among the strangest and least understood of the phenomena known as occult—would not, in the opinion of the vast majority of impartial students of such matters, be morally if not logically conclusive proof that the vision had at least some foundation in objective external reality. Now in the case before us we

have either a spectral illusion common to eleven persons at least—St. Paul says to five hundred—and a spectral illusion apparently repeated many times; or else a fact. But this is not all. It is not merely that the Apostles believed firmly to the end of their days that they had seen and spoken with their risen Lord: it is that this belief dominated the whole course of their after-existence, and has dominated for eighteen centuries the course of civilization, the morality of nations, the history of the world. When, instead of being crowned King of the Jews, our Lord died on the cross, helpless, friendless, powerless,—the victim of that Jewish priesthood which was, in the hope of His disciples, to have accepted Him as sovereign—by the sentence of that Roman Power which in their hope He was as Messiah to have overthrown;—when (to set aside all those peculiar ideas of His followers about whose reality there can exist little reasonable doubt, but which might be challenged by thoroughgoing critical Pyrrhonists) His defeat seemed sealed and attested by His death—the Eleven and the rest of His adherents were dismayed, thunder-stricken, appalled. They had lost their faith in Him, lost evidently the very foundation of that hope and trust which, whether inspired by miracles or simply by the personal ascendancy of His nature, had sustained them up to that point. They were crushed, cowed, despairing. Within a very short time—according to the concurrent testimony of all the accounts within two or three days—their attitude of mind was completely, utterly, *irrevocably* changed. From deepest despair they reverted to a confidence firmer, fuller, more profound than they

had ever felt before; and that assurance in the Faith which had repeatedly faltered in the presence of their Lord Himself, never for a moment wavered again. If there be one single fact in the whole of the New Testament whereon we can rely, it is this. If there be one fact in history proved beyond reasonable doubt or dispute, it is this. I repeat that on the Friday evening the Apostles and the rest of the little flock were sunk in the depth of desolation and darkness, utterly confounded, apparently believing themselves deceived as well as defeated and undone. On the Monday they had regained confidence, an inward conviction and certainty far stronger than the personal presence, the irresistible moral ascendancy of their living Master had ever given them. Not the roar of the mob, not the menaces of the priesthood, not the severities of the Government, not scourges, not chains, not the axe or the cross—could shake or even alarm them. They were able to communicate this assurance to thousands in their own generation, to tens of thousands in that which followed them; so that those multitudes who caught the contagion of their confidence not merely accepted death without abject terror, but welcomed it, nay often invoked it with eagerness and delight; smiled back calm passionless defiance to the howls and execrations of the amphitheatre, and stood firm without arms offensive or defensive, to await the fierce spring of the fasting lion. *What had happened between Friday evening and Monday morning?* This question the sceptic should answer if he is to expect from us serious practical attention to his unbelief. *What could* have occurred in that short interval—save the one thing affirmed by those who alone knew

it, and confirmed by the power it gave them over others—that could have produced on the minds of frightened half-educated men the effect we *know* to have been produced; the effect attested by its consequences not merely in the life of the Apostles themselves but in the subsequent triumph of the Church, in the conquest of Europe, in the whole history of Christendom, in the state of the world at this moment? Accept as a truth the Resurrection of the Master, and all is clear and consistent. I care nothing—comparatively speaking—for His recorded prophecies; for the purposes of my present argument, I lay no emphasis on the sanction which the special exceptional nature of His Resurrection is supposed to give to claims asserting His Divine or at least His superhuman character,—claims made much more often and eagerly for Him than by Him. The point on which I would insist is simply this; that between the Friday sunset and the Monday morning of that first Easter week, something occurred which not merely restored the courage and faith of the disciples but taught them to look alike on the death of their Master and on their own in an utterly new light—a light that never before in human experience, not for patriot martyrs or martial heroes, not for philosophers or prophets, not for Socrates or Hannibal, not for David or Isaiah, had broken on the utter darkness of the grave. Something had happened, which, for those who witnessed it and for those to whom they were so strangely able to impart the fulness of their own conviction, converted the hour of ruin into that of triumph, the Cross into a Throne, the wreath of thorns into the Crown not of Judæa but of the Universe. Something had hap-

pened which caused not merely the eye-witnesses of the event but all whom those eye-witnesses could influence—and the extent and duration of that influence is itself a marvel—to look forward to their last hour (though their path out of this world should lie through agony and horror, through the tortures of Nero's garden and the terrors of the arena) with passionate exultation. If the incident which did occur was the Resurrection of Christ, then all these consequences hang together. His return to life not merely refuted the timid inferences drawn from His death—not merely showed that that death was no defeat but the sublimest of victories—but also set the seal on that promise of immortality which after all is to all who really lay hold on it with heartfelt faith, to every Christian man and woman, the best and dearest of all hopes and all blessings; which was assuredly, in the first centuries of its growth, the principal, the vital, the irresistible attraction held out by Christianity to rich and poor, to slave and freeman. What other conceivable event could at once have re-established on the instant in tenfold strength the personal faith and loyalty of the disciples to their Master, *and also* utterly changed for them and all whom they could convince the aspect of death? Nothing, I conceive, but either the real or the apparent return to life of their dead Lord.

“Real or apparent. But of course I am aware how often, baffled by irresistible proof that all the little band of witnesses unquestionably and unquestioningly believed in the Resurrection, sceptics have striven to account for that belief by some suggestion compatible with its unreality. The Apostles ‘saw somebody like

their Master, and were so utterly silly, so absurdly credulous, so easily converted from despair to confidence—so ready for a second revulsion of feeling, and that the most tremendous which human minds had ever undergone—that the mere chance sight of some one resembling the Master satisfied them at once that the most stupendous of recorded miracles had occurred.' Really I can hardly condescend to answer what can, scarcely have been put forward as a serious argument. Or, again—'Christ never died on the cross, and revived in the grave to natural corporal life.' If so, why were all His friends deceived? What became of their revived Chief? I should treat this suggestion with little more respect than I have shown to the former, had it not received some hesitating support from one or two writers whose literary repute and success in other fields afford a guarantee that they have not put forth to the world this suggestion till they had carefully considered, and deliberately judged it worthy of investigation if not of belief. But, I confess, few eccentricities of human thought, few of the 'follies of the wise,' ever surprised me more than the acceptance, or half-acceptance—dubious, hesitant, ambiguous as it was—of this extraordinary supposition by an author known to have read widely, if not deeply on the subject. A man generally careful and wary could only have been led into such a departure from his usual caution in expressing startling views by want of that familiarity with the character of the time, and with some all-important conditions of the situation, which a thorough classical education would have given. Evidently his

imagination fails to realize even faintly what the real situation was, to apprehend the variety of wild improbabilities, I might say moral impossibilities, involved in the hypothesis to which he has given a hasty if partial sanction. It is said, and with force, that the story of the guard at the Sepulchre is on historic grounds alone all but incredible. No one acquainted with Roman discipline has found it otherwise than most difficult to believe that Roman soldiers could have dared to carry to their commander a confession of having slept at their post. Rather than quit his station without orders, under circumstances, the most appalling, circumstances which would certainly have secured him from punishment, the Roman sentinel at Pompeii perished amid the shower of ashes which buried the city; remaining at "attention" while every one else was flying through the gate he guarded. The habit of military obedience was unshaken by what must have seemed the crash of a falling world. And we are to believe that the comrades of such a soldier, trained under the same merciless discipline of the legion, were bribed to accuse themselves of a military crime which even the incomparably milder discipline of modern and Christian armies has almost invariably punished with death! Again, no one who realizes the contempt of a Roman noble or officer for a people like the Jews can admit that the promise of the Pharisees or the Priests to intercede for them would seem to Roman soldiery worth an *iota*. The improbability of this story—which, after all, is obviously told at second-hand, since the Apostles could not know what passed in the

Jewish Council or the Roman camp—has been used from age to age, by writer after writer, as one of the strongest grounds for distrusting the veracity of the general narrative. The hypothesis that Jesus did not die on the Cross involves far greater incongruities. He was crucified by Roman soldiers familiar with that form of punishment and with its common effects. Now crucifixion was a slow and lingering form of capital punishment. In order to render it such the victim was very often fastened only with ropes; the nails not being a support but hastening death, and being therefore rather a mercy than an additional torture. It must have been among the most common and familiar incidents of crucifixion that the victim should go off into a death-like swoon. It is a thousandfold more likely that an English hangman, in the days when Jack Ketch had daily practice in his trade, should be mistaken as to the death of a felon on the gallows, than that a Roman soldier should be deceived by the swooning of a crucified sufferer. The taking down the bodies from the crosses on Calvary was, as is made evident by the narrative itself, a most unusual proceeding. As a rule men hung on the cross for two or three days before death. The approach of a Sabbath of peculiar sanctity induced the Jewish Council to insist on, and Pilate to grant, the removal of the crosses at sunset on the day of crucifixion. The thieves were not dead—it would have been very strange if they had—and the executioners therefore gave the *coup de grâce* by breaking their legs, a shock sufficient to kill when the body and nerves were exhausted by the terrible torture of the unnatural



attitude which formed the essential cruelty and the deadly agony of crucifixion. Jesus was so evidently dead, that, according to the story, this precaution was not taken. Observe here the strange and manifold inconsistency of the most thoroughly loyal and impartial sceptics. The absence of the *coup de grâce* and the infliction of the spear-wound rest on exactly equal authority — yet every critic who doubts the death by implication admits the first and denies the second (for doctors tell me that the ‘blood and water’ indicate an injury which must have been mortal). Again, the death is the essential fact of the story and therefore better attested than the absence of the leg-breaking; yet the sceptic accepts implicitly the trivial detail and rejects the central, vital, best-assured point in the whole evidence: for of course Jesus could not have gone about after His supposed revival with broken limbs. Remember that the ordinary infliction in such a case of the *coup de grâce* is an implied condition of the whole story: men seldom or never died on the cross in a few hours, and therefore we should naturally assume that, when the three bodies were taken down on Friday evening, either death was clearly ascertained or means were taken to inflict death at once. And that careful investigation which the situation implies is expressly affirmed by the narrator. The executioners would assume that Jesus was *not* dead, till it had been made clear that He was. It is simply incredible that soldiers who must have seen scores of men swoon under similar circumstances should have taken no care to ascertain that Jesus had not so swooned. Again, if He were not dead, how

came He to recover so speedily and so completely that within two days He was walking about? How was it that no one but His friends ever recognized Him? And, finally, what became of Him at last? I do not dwell on the fact that not one single incident of the story, as told in any one of the five narratives we have, is compatible with such a supposition: for four of these narratives are challenged as mythical by those who embrace this extravagant hypothesis, and St. Paul says little or nothing of the Crucifixion itself and the attendant circumstances.

“The only intelligible rational suggestion which does not admit a distinct and astounding miracle is that which places the reappearance of our crucified Lord among those ghostly apparitions of which so many are on record, and of which not a few are attested by circumstances and evidence that would suffice to hang any man, however high his character, however improbable the charge against him, before the most incredulous judge and before a jury every member of which was opposed to capital punishment. But this supposition only alters the nature and character of the problem; it does not in anywise get rid of the marvellous or even of the so-called supernatural element of the narrative. If the whole story be not an impudent fiction—if St. Paul did not deliberately repeat a lie, which all the other Apostles could have contradicted; or if there were not a conspiracy among them, which could have no motive compatible with what we know of their state of mind, to palm off a falsehood upon the world at the risk of their lives, and without chance of reward—it is certain that the case was not one of

spectral illusion; for I believe that no spectral illusion (proved to be such) is ever known to have occurred to two people at once; and no ghost has ever appeared under circumstances at all approaching in frequency and persistency of presentment, or in opportunity of verification those attested by St. Paul and by the Evangelists. The Apostles did not expect such an apparition; neither did the women to whom it seems that Christ first presented Himself. If, then, the Resurrection be simply a ghost-story verified by an unparalleled concurrence of testimony, the rational inference would be—not that Christ did not rise but—that ghostly apparitions are actually possible, and that our Lord did appear as a spirit, after His death on the Cross, to those who had known Him in life. Such a conclusion is precisely that to which those who endeavour in this way to get rid of the miracle of the Resurrection are most averse; so that I need hardly enlarge further upon this view of the case. Almost the only incident incompatible with such a supposition is the special converse with the doubting Thomas; and this may have been an interpolation, or its apparent purport may be due to some accidental mistranslation very natural in a Greek record of words spoken probably in Aramaic or some other Eastern dialect. I may point out, by the way, that the little circumstances so most relied on by sceptics to render the story of the Resurrection ridiculous—the eating and drinking, and so forth—are reproduced in the alleged phenomena of modern Spiritualism; phenomena which, however adulterated by deliberate imposture or semi-conscious exaggeration and even falsehood, no one who has con-

scientifically and extensively studied them can impute in their entirety to mere jugglery and wilful deception.

“Before I conclude, there is another point on which I must for a few moments dwell. Sceptical critics almost invariably write and speak as if Our Lord had appeared among a barbaric people and in a credulous age. The fact is that the era of Augustus and Tiberius was that of a civilization the most sceptical, the most scientific, the most thoroughly incredulous and materialist of any that the world seems to have known between the age of Rameses and that of Napoleon. The nations surrounding the Mediterranean were at that time what France, Germany, England, and the United States now are; the centre and seat of intellectual culture, of religious indifference, of practical observation, of negative philosophy. At no period in history, prior to the latter half of the seventeenth century, could a religious teacher pretending to miraculous powers have found himself at a greater disadvantage whether from the temper of the many, or the culture of the few. The prevalent philosophy was that of Epicurus: its principal rival apparently the scepticism of the Academy, refined and exaggerated into something approaching the absolute negations of Pyrrhonism. A myth would I conceive have less chance of growth at that point of time than at any other that could be named before the age of newspapers. An alleged resurrection from the dead would find no more easy credence from Gamaliel and Caiaphas, from Pilate and Festus, than from the contemporaries of Lord Bacon or of Voltaire. That within the lifetime of a single generation a complete mythical history relative to facts alleged to have occurred in

public, in the capital of a Roman province—a false narrative full of miracles crowned by the most astounding of all miracles—should have grown up and been eagerly accepted by scores of thousands, is almost as improbable as that the same thing should occur in our own times. It is certain that St. Paul—a man learned (it seems) in the best learning of his time, a scholar who might have debated in the schools of Athens, or pleaded before Tiberius in the presence of the Senate—within a few years after the event, was somehow or other converted to the belief that one whom he had bitterly and actively hated as a traitor to his creed and nation was in fact a prophet, and something more than a prophet; that a Galilean artisan had miraculously risen from the grave, thus elevated immeasurably above the greatest and most sacred personages of Jewish history, if we except the dubious instance of Elijah; an idea utterly repugnant to the whole tendency of Jewish thought, whereof Saul was a typical representative. Further, I repeat that neither St. Paul nor any other of those less cultivated fellow-believers on whose eye-witness in part at least he must have accepted this statement, were ever shaken for a moment in their absolute conviction of its truth. Again, it is true that we have little or no unquestionable testimony to the existence of our present Gospels till the middle of the second century. But we have indubitable external testimony to the existence of *some* Memoirs of the Apostles at a much earlier date. In the Gospel narrative itself we have the strongest possible internal testimony to the fact that, within forty or fifty years after the Crucifixion, either one of the present Gospels or a

written narrative of such supreme authority, that no one dared to alter or omit any part of its contents was in existence and to all appearance received by the Church. I refer to the passage in which St. Matthew (*vide* 24th chapter) records the prophecy of our Lord regarding the destruction of Jerusalem. In that passage the fall of the Jewish capital is entangled in inseparable confusion with that destruction of the world which the first generation of Christians apparently expected to occur in their own lifetime. Now a writer independently recording such predictions after the event, and knowing that the fall of Jerusalem had *not* been followed immediately or speedily by the universal cataclysm, would not have recorded in these peculiar terms predictions which in their present form were certainly not fulfilled, and which, since in that form they had to his knowledge, been falsified, he could not have thought himself obliged to accept and preserve as of Divine authority. In short, it is difficult for a Christian critic, however highly he esteems the loyalty or even the inspiration of the Gospel writers, to believe that this prophecy in its present form was recorded at a later date than some three or four years at most after the capture of Jerusalem by Titus. It is still more inconsistent on the part of a sceptic to assign to it a later date, since by his theory the writers have more or less modified their narrative to suit their own conception of what were or should have been the facts, so that St. Matthew would not have hesitated to put this record in accordance with such events as he had already witnessed. Therefore both parties, but especially those who deny the essential trustworthiness of the Evangelists, are impaled on one

or other horn of a dilemma. Either this passage, and the rest of the book of which it is an inseparable part, was written within at most some forty years after the Crucifixion and while many of the original disciples were still alive—a view which at once disposes of the mytho-poietic theory, since so short a period in such an age and country allows no time for the development of an elaborate myth, a kind of fiction which indeed can scarcely grow up till all the eye-witnesses to the truth have disappeared—or the writer of the present Gospel copied from a record so highly revered that he dared not modify a single expression in one of its most perplexing passages. Now if the Evangelists had before them a writing of this character, we must assume that their narratives essentially agree with it; since it is • evident that one at least among them—not distinguished from the others (according to the internal testimony of his work) by exceptional scrupulosity—feared to save the credit of an inspired prophecy by departing from the text thereof; and if such a work, so revered, ever existed in the Church, its utter disappearance is simply incomprehensible. At any rate either we have (in the Gospel of St. Matthew) the immediate testimony of a writer recording the facts within less than half a century after their occurrence, and while the eye-witnesses were living and probably some of them within his reach; or we have at second-hand several narratives, all of them copied in part and derived more or less throughout from still earlier records, to which Christian opinion had already attached a peculiar authority and almost sanctity. In either case the testimony of the Gospels to the fact of the Resurrection carries with it all the

weight necessarily belonging to evidence liable when published to be corrected by living witnesses; and gives very strong independent confirmation to the essential substance of St. Paul's story. The variations of the story, as given by the three earlier Evangelists, are hardly compatible with the idea of copying from a common source. The reasonable inference then is, that we have one if not three Gospels—at least St. Matthew's—written in the lifetime of the Apostles. The chief variation—as regards the Resurrection itself and the appearances immediately following—is in the chronological order of the facts. The general tenor of each narrative is clear and coherent and they agree on the critical points. They testify distinctly and positively to the belief of nearly a score of persons that they had together and separately seen and spoken with the Lord after His Resurrection. An entirely independent witness testifies that he, after frequent intercourse with the eye-witnesses, if not in consequence thereof, had a firm belief in the same story; and also assures us that not merely a score but no fewer than five hundred persons had at one and the same time seen the same miraculous apparition. This evidence, powerful as it is, may not satisfy all critical enquirers: nay, I can more or less, after long experience of its frequency among men of unquestionable candour, understand the state of mind which induces some thoughtful and unprejudiced students—considering the extraordinary character of the statement—to reject it. But assuredly it is neither candid nor reasonable to cast aside such testimony as feeble or trivial. It is as strong as it well could be, as strong or stronger than the testimony on



which we accept any historical event not recorded in writing almost immediately after its occurrence by a historian in communication with eye-witnesses, and published during the lifetime of the latter. The essential central all-important fact of that life-history on which Christianity is founded is, then, so authenticated that its falsehood involves a moral marvel or miracle almost if not quite as great—almost if not quite as ‘incredible’—as the physical miracle or marvel attested. Our faith therefore rests on a foundation which, if it do not force the assent of all human reason, yet amply justifies to the clearest, calmest, and least partial intelligence the belief which the Church has entertained for more than eighteen centuries; and on which none among us could lose his hold without feeling that he had sustained the heaviest loss to which human thought is liable.”

The ladies drove home as they had driven to Church. We waited for Vere, and walked with him towards the Parsonage.

“There is one point in your sermon,” said Cleveland, “which some sceptics might be disposed to challenge. What evidence have you of that *immediate* revulsion in the feelings of the Apostles whereof you speak? What proof is there that they recovered their confidence prior to the day of Pentecost—except of course in the narratives as they stand, upon which you can hardly base an argument intended to convince those who doubt whether those narratives, St. Paul’s excepted, were written within a century after the events they record.”

“I think,” said Vere, “that internal evidence and the probabilities of the case show that the story, as

given in the Gospels and the Acts, truly represents the temper of the disciples and its rapid changes. I can not see what motive should induce a writer anxious to make out the best possible case for the Church—and this is the position imputed by sceptics to the Evangelists—to represent the disciples as more utterly confounded and dismayed by their Master's death than they actually were. Remember that such absolute dismay implies, even from our point of view, that they had forgotten most extraordinarily precise and distinct declarations of our Lord predicting His death and resurrection. By our antagonists, their forgetfulness is constantly employed to discredit the reality of these prophecies. How then disbelieve their own declaration, or that of their immediate pupils, that they had temporarily forgotten prophecies so vitally important and so likely to be recalled by the fulfilment of their first portion? Then—if we admit the utter confusion, the sense of defeat and deception existing among the disciples on Saturday—does not the mere fact that they did not disperse, break up, and abandon their creed within forty days, itself suffice to prove that some extraordinary change had taken place in their feelings; a change which must have been produced by some signal and striking incident? Again, in the story of Pentecost itself there is nothing to explain that *double* coincident change of mind on which I lay so much stress:—nothing to account for the unquestionable fact that whatever happened had this double effect. It not only completely reassured the disciples, giving them a far deeper and firmer confidence in their Master than they had shown during His life, but it also utterly

revolutionized the aspect in which we must assume that they—in common with all the rest of the world—had up to that time regarded death. To every one, however strongly he might uphold on natural or philosophical grounds the probability of a future existence, that probability seemed far too feeble and dim to overcome the instinctive horror and reluctance with which Greek and Barbarian, Roman and Jew, Aryan and Semite regarded the separation of soul from body: the departure of the former from the world lighted up by the sun. From the date assigned to the Resurrection, Christians ceased to regard death with fear, until Christianity had lost much of the vividness and reality of the impression it originally made on the minds that embraced it. And this was not due, as has been suggested, to the expectation of Christ's immediate coming within the lifetime of the Apostolic generation. That expectation, by inducing a hope that they might escape death altogether, would have tended to render Christians anxious to prolong life till the Lord's return by every means compatible with loyalty to Him: and long after it had been disappointed, the contempt of death and eagerness for martyrdom seem to have *grown* in force—as if the loss of Apostolic authority had rather relaxed the control of common-sense than damped the fire of enthusiasm or dimmed the clearness of conviction. It seems clear that these two changes of mental attitude on the part of the disciples—perhaps the two greatest revulsions of feeling ever undergone by human minds—were due to one single incident, occurring at any rate very soon after the Crucifixion: and nothing but a strong, overpowering, undoubting conviction that the

Lord had risen again will on any rational grounds account for either, much less for both and for their coincidence. Had no change taken place in the temper of the disciples they would as I say have dispersed long before Pentecost; and after all, the miracle of Pentecost has no meaning or worth except as a supplement to the Resurrection. Assuming the reality of the sudden influx of supernatural power and spiritual influence, and the accuracy of the Scriptural account (which few sceptics would grant), the advent of the Paraclete only assisted the Apostles in promulgating their faith. It does not help in the least to explain the faith itself. Again, from the earliest times, the first day of the week was regarded by Christians with peculiar veneration, and Easter-day with a higher reverence than any other religion has ever attached to any anniversary. It is evident, then, that from the very first the story of the Resurrection was inseparably connected with the Sunday following the Friday of the Crucifixion. In the absence of any sort of reason for assigning any other day or date to the incident, whatever it was, through which Christianity rose strengthened, assured, confident of victory from the grave of Christ, we ought, I think, to attach very great weight to the consistent and concurrent statements of all the witnesses whose narratives we possess. I think then that, on grounds common to sceptics and Christians, the latter are justified in peremptorily assuming that whatever marvel did occur, or seem to occur, to produce the effect alleged and admitted on all hands, occurred or seemed to occur between Friday night and Monday morning. Had it been long postponed the disciples

would in their then frame of mind have dispersed and given up the cause in despair. But the mere date is of comparatively little consequence to my argument; if it be only granted that within a very few days or weeks after the Crucifixion the Apostles positively affirmed and believed with unhesitating and absolute confidence that they had seen their Lord once more alive, and under conditions wholly unparalleled."

"Observe," said Sterne, "that no one of the accounts agrees with any other. Every one of them places the several incidents of the Sunday in a different order; and some insert very important occurrences not mentioned by the others; one or two of them obviously tending, I might say evidently intended, to anticipate and refute the more obvious objections likely to be made against the actual facts of death and resurrection; and therefore much more likely to have been invented by the relator than to have been wittingly omitted by other narrators."

"I admit," replied Vere, "the validity of both your objections from your point of view. But such an admission is inconsistent only with that verbal inspiration or infallible accuracy of the several narratives which few competent critics of the present generation have ever maintained. Is it not obvious that such perfect coincidence as verbal inspiration might have given would have been fatal to the acceptance of the story by men of critical temper or sceptical bias, when the evidence once became matter of written history? Therefore the most devoutly convinced Christian may well believe that, here as throughout the Gospel narrative, for reasons easily conceivable, verbal inspiration

and superhuman accuracy were intentionally withheld. We should have much more difficulty in sustaining against objectors the actual independence of several narratives exactly accordant, than in reconciling in essential points the differences of several witnesses whose independence is proved by those very differences. The main features of the story, however, are perfectly clear and coherent in nearly all the narratives. The grave, we are told, was found empty. Our Lord appeared first to certain women; then to the two or three apostles always most intimately associated with Him during His natural life; then to the Eleven, and afterwards on different occasions to other disciples. The appearance to five hundred brethren at once, of which St. Paul speaks, is not mentioned by any other writer. This would be fatal to all critical belief in its truth, had St. Paul written after the rest. But the order in which the various books of the New Testament are arranged by the Canon, ministers herein as in other cases to confusion and mistake. They are arranged generally speaking according to the chronology of their contents, not of their production. The letter from which I took my text was probably written long before the earliest of the Gospels; and some time prior to the composition of the Acts, or even of that part of the Acts which relates some of the individual adventures of St. Paul and his companions in the first person, and which, as some think, is a contemporary fragment imbedded in a composition of later date. It is strange perhaps that the writer of the Acts—if he were that personal companion of St. Paul whose memoir forms part of his work—should not have mentioned the fact

attested by the great Apostle; but since St. Paul is the earliest witness, the first narrator, we cannot suppose the apparition to the five hundred to be a later addition to the original account of the Resurrection—unless, indeed, it be an interpolation in the Epistle, which there seems no reason to suspect.”

“How,” inquired Sterne, “can you treat St. Paul as a trustworthy witness? In this very chapter he claims himself to have seen his Lord in a way which few but thorough-going believers can regard as other than a subjective vision. Why suppose that the apparition to the five hundred was any more real and objective than that to himself?”

“Obviously,” interposed Cleveland, “because one man may see a vision, and that vision may be a spectral illusion; but an apparition to five hundred persons must be an objective reality. St. Paul’s liability, if it were liability, to be misled by a spectral illusion would not in the slightest degree invalidate his trustworthiness as a reporter of facts not explicable as illusions, or of statements received from others. At the very worst, it could only prove that he had not physiological and pathological learning, or had not sufficient soundness of logic to distinguish between the impression produced on his brain by a sun-stroke and that produced by an actual phenomenon presented to his bodily eyes. Probably scarcely any person in that age did possess in fulness either qualification. I am not sure that any, I am sure that very few, possess them now. Are we then to suppose that no man of that age was—that only here and there a scientific specialist now is—a trustworthy witness to facts not capable of being

reduced to spectral illusions, or a competent reporter of the statements of others?"

"St. Paul," replied Sterne, "was so liable to self-deception that I should hardly choose to rely on his sole testimony on any point in which he was passionately interested. To suppose that he or any other of the primitive preachers or martyrs of the Church were conscious impostors would be absurd. But most of them were certainly wild enthusiasts; and St. Paul, with all his education and with all his eloquence, was perhaps the wildest enthusiast among them."

"Even so," said Cleveland, "it is difficult to comprehend the instantaneous change which turned his enthusiasm into a direction diametrically opposite to that it had previously pursued. Spectral illusions, or mental hallucinations of whatever kind, are apt to confirm rather than to contradict the previous tendency of the mind they affect. It is at least strange and improbable that the fancy of a furious Jewish persecutor of Christians should suddenly present to him the aspect and the voice of Christ as a denizen of heaven."

"It seems to me," said Sterne, "that putting aside the epistles of St. Paul; you have simply no evidence whatever respecting the facts of the Crucifixion. You rely entirely on a single passage in St. Matthew's Gospel to vindicate your belief that at least one of the four narratives was written before A.D. 75. Now it is notorious that the best critics regard St. Matthew's as probably the least trustworthy of the Synoptics; it is open to several objections not applying to the others. In the first place, the traditional Gospel said to have



existed among the Jews, or in the Church of Palestine—with which the orthodox defenders of Christianity try to identify the present first Gospel—was not written in Greek. It seems to be admitted that the present version was originally written in Greek, and is not a translation. Therefore our present Gospel of St. Matthew is not that traditional Gospel of St. Matthew with which it was identified in the pre-critical days. Again, while evidently written in Greek, it is as evidently written by a Jew for Jews, being full of references to the Old Testament, and particularly to prophecies which would have had no weight for the Gentiles. Again, if there be one thing more certain than another respecting the character of any one Gospel, it is that the writer of the first blundered headlong whenever he dealt with a prophecy. There is scarcely one of those he has quoted that he has not signally and even ridiculously misapplied. Yet it is on a single passage in this inexplicable and certainly untrustworthy book that you rest your fundamental assumption that we have in some shape either a contemporary record, or narratives taken from contemporary records of very high authority."

"I cannot," answered Vere, "enter at length into your criticism on the first Evangelist. I will only remind you that in his day as in ours the Jews were a scattered people. Though they had still a centre at Jerusalem and a country in Judea, they had for one reason or another dispersed themselves over the Roman and probably over great part of the Eastern world. In Alexandria, and there is reason to believe

in nearly every other great commercial city, there was not merely a great number of Jews but an organized Jewish community. To these probably, and to the proselytes they had made, St. Matthew addressed his Gospel as we have it now. Granting that he did not understand the sense of the prophecies he applies to Our Lord, this hardly invalidates his statement of facts."

"Take note," replied Sterne, "that one vital statement of fact is distinctly connected with a misapplied prophecy—'a bone of Him shall not be broken.' St. Matthew so closely works this in with his story of the Crucifixion and his evidence of actual death, that the manifest purpose of the statement, coupled with his blunder on the one point, renders his assertion on the other untrustworthy."

"I do not see that," replied Cleveland. "It is surely possible that a man may be a blundering interpreter of prophecy, and yet a perfectly trustworthy authority either as to facts he had seen or as to statements from eye-witnesses!"

"But," rejoined Sterne, "the identification of Christ with the Pascal lamb evinces a comparatively late composition. The idea was of gradual and not very early growth in the Church—viz., that the Passover was a symbol of the Crucifixion. That idea pervades the Revelations; a book undoubtedly late and in all likelihood spurious: a book which even Luther was hardly willing to admit into the Canon. If then the first Evangelist entertained this view, we have every reason to suppose that he wrote not in the first but in the second century; and though I grant the difficulty

of believing that a man of his character—writing rather as a controversialist than as a historian—recorded without modification a prediction (like that of his 24th chapter) which he must have known to be falsified by the event, yet this is merely a difficulty; not a proof of date which can weigh against the mass of varied evidence proving the lateness of the first Gospel.”

“We cannot,” said Vere, “argue out at length the authenticity of the various books of the New Testament. One thing I think all candid critics must admit: there is no doubt whatever that Jesus Christ was crucified at the date assigned. The internal evidence, and the impossibility of assigning a motive for falsehood—together with that evidence of the existence of some record fairly to be called contemporary as published in the Church while the first disciples were living (which, I repeat, seems to be furnished by the 24th Matthew)—renders it only reasonable to suppose that we have an essentially true account of that which the disciples themselves witnessed or which was publicly notorious. I think it must be granted that the Crucifixion took place substantially as we are told. Our Lord was crucified between two robbers; the bodies were taken down from the cross the same evening. Therefore the *coup de grâce* must have been given in some form or other, unless the death was so clear, so evident to men accustomed to witness crucifixions and familiar with death-like swoons on the cross, that they thought it not worth while to prove it by the usual method. That the *coup de grâce* was given by breaking the legs we ought to believe, because we can see no sort of motive for falsehood on this point, and because

the writers must have known what the practice actually was. Now remember that the fact that the legs of Jesus were not broken is vital to the theory that He was not dead: it is far more essential to that view than to any Christian theory. Again, as to the spear-wound, I grant that we have no sufficient proof thereof in the mere statement of one Evangelist; but we have very strong internal evidence on the point. There is no special reason conceivable for the invention of such a story; and if it had been invented it is very unlikely that the peculiar incident which alone gives it importance—the pouring out at once of blood and water, which, as I am told, indicates the piercing of the pericardium, and must have ensured death—should have been recorded by a writer who could hardly be supposed to know the significance of the fact. An observation which accords with a truth only ascertained in a much later age is verified by the strongest of probabilities; since nothing is less likely than that an ignorant inventor should have correctly represented a physical fact with which he could not well be personally acquainted yet which strictly accords with what we know would probably have been the case. If a Roman soldier did, in order to make sure of the death, or from mere wantonness, pierce the side of the crucified victim with a spear, he would naturally aim at the heart; and if he did aim at the heart the result would have been, as I am told, that which is actually represented in the story. Apologists justly lay great stress on the correctness of the New Testament in regard to the rank, titles, and names of particular Governors at the several dates of the narrative as clear proof of the

truth and authenticity of the record; since a late compiler or forger would not have known or thought of such details as the time at which different provinces were transferred from Senatorial proconsul to Imperial proprætors and the like; and a still greater value attaches to accuracy in details whose import was unknown to the writer. Again, the cohesion and internal probability of the whole narrative is very striking. Leave out the things which the Christians could not have known save by rumour—for example what passed between the Pharisees and the guard, or what took place in the Council—the story is thoroughly reasonable and likely, and, in one word, hangs together completely. I repeat once more:—accept the Resurrection as a fact, and everything is clearly and simply accounted for. Suppose the whole story a myth founded on some obscure facts not involving any extraordinary incident, and we are landed in a maze of contradictions and absurdities whose irreconcilability and perplexity become more apparent the more closely we scrutinize the tale, and are made more and more striking by each successive attempt to construct a probable hypothesis without admitting the truth of the central fact of the Evangelical narrative. Moreover it is absolutely clear, unquestionably certain, that for years before the Epistle to the Corinthians was written the Christians—forming a community or Church in scores of different places—all believed that their Master had died on the cross, and had risen again. The wide acceptance of such a belief if not accordant with the fact in such an age, within some ten or fifteen years after the event, would be very extraordinary even had it prevailed only among people

predisposed to believe in and accept it. But observe what really happened. The disciples at the time of the Crucifixion were a small band of Galileans and Jews confined to a single district. Something happened after the Crucifixion which deeply and irrevocably fixed in their minds the conviction that their crucified Master had risen immediately from the dead. They went forth to preach this alleged fact exclusively among people who had no sort of reason for accepting it willingly. They addressed themselves at first chiefly to Jews, to whom their doctrine and the miracle on which it was founded were not merely unattractive but offensive. They addressed themselves secondly to Gentiles, chiefly Greeks, who had never heard the name of Jesus, who generally despised the Jews, and were as little disposed as men could be to readily believe in the revivification of any man, least of all of a Jew and a convicted criminal. Yet within a few years of the event a religion founded exclusively on this Apostolic statement, and without this statement devoid of all reason or meaning, was accepted—substantially in the form in which we now have it—by thousands originally either hostile or contemptuous. This fact alone appears to me to render the mythical theory simply untenable. Long before there had been time for the growth of a myth, even in prepared soil, the faith of which the Crucifixion and the Resurrection were the life, the sap, the very essence, had taken root so firm that nothing could shake it or prevent its growth, in soil the most unfavourable to any such plant. This alone would prove that the story differed in essence and character from every other myth recorded in the history of

human error or of false religions: and all the critics have failed to give even a plausible explanation of this unquestionable peculiarity of the case on any assumption not admitting the essential truth of the existing narrative. The books of Strauss and Renan are very interesting; their hypothetical stories very curious as specimens of human ingenuity. But their very elaboration contrasts strangely with the simple straightforward coherence of the Evangelical history, and I certainly cannot give to any one of them the epithet of plausible, much less of probable."

Vere here left us, and we walked on for a few minutes in silence.

Sterne then said—"I wish I had put a critical question to Vere as to his own belief, though perhaps it would have been hardly fair towards a clergyman. According to the Scripture narrative, that which rose from the dead and reappeared to the disciples on various occasions was the very body, the physical fleshly frame that had undergone crucifixion, nay, according to one story, the actual prints of the nails—which by the way at that time would not have been prints but cruel festering wounds, probably too severe and sore to permit motion—were pointed out to a sceptical disciple. Yet this body, this physical frame, had all the powers attributed to spirits by those in all ages who record the apparition of ghosts. It could pass through doors, it could appear and disappear, and finally it vanished, being taken up into the visible heavens. Does Vere believe that the body actually disappeared from the grave and was reanimated, or does he suppose that it was the so-called soul that reappeared in bodily shape to the disciples?"

"Well as I am acquainted with Vere," said Cleveland, "I cannot undertake on his part to answer that question. What I will say on my own part is this: the facts or allegations on which the corporal resurrection or revivification of the body are affirmed are isolated incidents, and some of them are evidently employed if not invented for a controversial purpose—viz., to prove the resurrection of the physical frame. Take the story as a whole, and it becomes evident that what is described was a ghost or spirit possessed of attributes not compatible with the grossness of the material body. Again, the careful distinction drawn by St. Paul between the body of flesh which after death is laid in the grave and the spiritual body which will inhabit the other world seems to me on the whole incompatible with a distinct impression on his mind that the body of his risen Lord was the same body that had been buried. The strangest and wildest improbabilities of the actual narrative are those connected with the disappearance of the body from the grave. Reject these, and there is little in the story more strange than may be found in other well-attested apparitions, excepting the frequency and persistence of the reappearances. For myself, then, I distinctly decline to believe that the body ever rose from the sepulchre. If there were any Resurrection at all, I believe that it must have been that of the soul alone, though no doubt the soul presented to those who saw it—if it was seen—the same appearance that the body had worn in life, as has been the case with nearly every apparition on record."



## CHAPTER XVII.

*DESIGN IN DEVELOPMENT.*

ON another occasion we were sitting—all of those I have introduced to the reader, except the ladies—in the turret smoking-room, when, I forget exactly how, the conversation turned on the evidence of Creative Intelligence and Providential government.

“It has always seemed to me,” said Sterne, “that since most Theists admit that there is no actual proof—that there is no evidence capable of carrying conviction to minds entirely impartial, indifferent, or hostile—either of the existence of a Deity or of human immortality, the affirmative is little better than ridiculous.”

“Why more ridiculous,” inquired Gerard, “than the negative?”

“First,” answered Sterne, “because the negative is always to be assumed where the affirmative cannot be substantiated, or at least made to seem probable. The chances against any assumption or affirmation made at random and without proof are infinite. For example, neither you nor I know whether a pine-tree grows on a given spot in a particular island of the Atlantic. If you say that there is such a pine, and I deny it, we may both be fools for asserting what we do not know; but the chances are millions to one that you are wrong and

I am right. Now Deity and immortality are inventions of human imagination quite as baseless as the supposed existence of the pine at that particular spot. There is no shadow of evidence for either. And again, we have some notion how each of these ideas came into the minds of people; and in each case we see that their origin was utterly fallacious. I will not now discuss the second point, but confine myself to the first. Setting aside the notion of a primæval Revelation, itself devoid of evidence; we can see that prehistoric men believed in certain superhuman forces—the wind, the sea, the sun, the lightning, and so forth—and, having themselves no idea or experience of unintelligent force, they naturally ascribed to these superhuman powers human intelligence and will. Hence, presently they came to ascribe to them, or to some imaginary ruler of each, something like human form and features. It was long before any race—even the Semitic, among which the first extra-Egyptian civilization probably grew up—perceived such a correlation between the different forces of nature as induced them to ascribe first orderly obedience to supreme control, and afterwards simple unity, to the imaginary superhuman powers. The very name of God in the oldest biblical records proves that the unity ascribed to Him was of late growth. We all know that the name translated “God” is a plural—Elohim. Its connection with a verb in the singular shows that the writers of these earliest records had grasped the idea of unity in Nature or rather in the Power they recognized behind the laws of Nature. But it also shows how recent was that recognition. We see then that the original idea of God, or Gods, grew out of

a mistake; and nothing that has since happened, no subsequent discovery has given to that idea any real evidential sanction, or afforded a new and adequate basis in lieu of the confessed fallacy of the primary conception. We believe in one God simply because our remote ancestors believed that every force must be directed by a man-like intelligence; and since the cause of our belief was a blunder, the belief itself can hardly be reasonable."

"You forget," said Gerard, that the worship of natural forces does not seem to have been the oldest; and that, on the other hand, the earliest worship does not seem always to have given human form to supposed superhuman beings. The Egyptians, to all appearance the oldest of civilized races, worshipped animals and insects. The Assyrians, the founders of the next military empire known to history, worshipped the 'Host of Heaven,' and gave to the images of their Deities composite animal forms. The Hindoos have invested their gods with every sort of monstrous and incompatible physical shape."

"I think," said Sterne, "that if we could get back far enough—behind the highly refined and probably symbolic worships of Egypt and Assyria—we should find nature-worship at the bottom of all. The Hindoo gods, with their elephant heads, their hundred arms, and so forth, are but the efforts of a childish imagination to embody by symbol or by mere multiplication the idea of indefinitely enhanced force, transcending all known physical powers. The Hindoo religion seems to have been in the first instance—so far as we can fairly judge by existing relics and by survival of

character,—one of the lowest and most abject forms of worship of pure force ever found even among a half-civilized people. The Assyrian compound shapes—the bull with wings and so forth—were symbols of force suggested by a higher and manlier imagination, such as seems natural in a race which, in its first fulness of national vitality and imperial pride, was probably superior to any Oriental contemporaries. The Egyptian worship of the lower animals was almost certainly symbolic. The scarabæus, the calf, and so forth, were emblems rather than images of the productive powers ascribed to Deity; though the vulgar probably converted into the idol what the priesthood intended for a symbol; a frequent step in mythopoietic progress. I have always thought that the Chaldean and other star-worship, like the fire-worship of the Parsees, originated in a scientific truth which it is strange that any race of men at so early an epoch in human history should so quickly and keenly, however dimly and vaguely, have apprehended:—the supreme importance of the sun as the vivifying source of all natural forces, and the generator of life on earth. Learning to adore the largest of the heavenly bodies, they naturally went on to worship the rest; though it is certainly curious that there is considerable doubt whether in the Chaldean system or in any other whose gods were identified with stars the sun was regarded as the chief deity.”

“I cannot admit,” said Cleveland, “that the idea of God—that is of a Creative Intelligence and, if you will, of a Providential government—is without proof. It could not perhaps have been *proved* till recently,

because it is only within the last century or two that a Creation itself has been demonstrated. Till lately there seemed no cogent or sufficient, certainly no conclusive evidence that the visible universe had not existed from eternity in something very like its present form. But scientific men now admit this not to have been the case. To take the Solar system alone, it is pretty generally agreed that there was a period when not only the earth, but the entire system whereof this planet forms a comparatively trivial part, was 'without form and void.' Most authorities incline to regard it as having been a glowing mass of vapour, probably a chaotic nebula. From chaos as a starting-point I think we may demonstrate the existence of an external Creative Power; and it can scarcely be supposed that the results which that Power has produced were accidental, or that the Power itself was unconscious of or non-intelligent in its action. My argument is briefly this. To bring the Solar system from the chaotic to the present condition must have taken a definite time under the influence of definite forces. Say that this operation occupied a billion of years;—the actual number matters nothing. What is essential is that the time must have been finite: the forces acting being definite and limited in power must have taken a definite period to produce a definite effect. Go back to the beginning of this billion of years. The forces in question had then not begun to act; in fact were non-existent. What set them going? Say if you will that the impulse was given by some law operating on a wider scale, which had at that moment come to

bear on our little Cosmos. That law also must have taken a definite time, say ten billions of years, to reach the point at which it thus came into effect. At the beginning of all, you must come to a time when the entire universe was inert and chaotic; as we are told by some astronomers that a time will come when it will be cold, lifeless, and probably motionless. There must have been a time when no laws, no forces, were operating within the infinite space now apparently occupied by countless suns, systems of suns, and systems of systems, in every stage of progress. Now force cannot originate itself; therefore there must have been an originator of the forces which you may allege to have worked out without help or guidance the actual result. That originator must surely have possessed will; otherwise it, or he, could hardly have given the impulse. It must have possessed intelligence, or it could hardly have given direction, coherence and system to the laws by which the Cosmos is confessedly governed, or to those by which it may be supposed to have been reduced to order and set in motion. It seems to me that we thus obtain actual proof of something which it is not foolish or unwarrantable to call God: a Will and an Intelligence capable of producing the stupendous system we now see around us in all its marvellous perfection of order, movement, life. The Being in whom that will and intelligence resided may not be, in the strictest sense of the words, perfect or absolute either in wisdom or in power. We can only discern that His wisdom and His power were infinitely beyond anything that we know or can conceive. That He was not unconditioned

I hold to be certain; for He who displayed the wisdom which has created the Universe, and the goodness which has filled our little planet with joyous life, would have made His work free from evil if He could have done so without sacrificing some object more essential than even the exclusion of evil and pain, *i.e.*, were He unfettered by conditions. I am inclined to suppose that He did not create matter but only vivified it by introducing law and force. Be this as it may, when once you admit the Universe to have begun in something utterly different from that which now exists, you must, I think, admit the logical force of the argument I have so roughly sketched out; which seems to me distinctly to demonstrate the existence of an intelligent Creator possessed of will and purpose as well as of power."

"You appear," said Dalway, "to think of our world, at least, much as the Portuguese king thought of the Universe:—*viz.*, that if you had been consulted at the outset you could have given the Creator some useful hints."

"No," said Cleveland. "If I had been endowed with perfect wisdom and perfect unconditioned power, I should hardly have made the world so imperfect—by which phrase I mean so defaced here and there by pain and suffering, and still more by moral evil—as it is. Therefore I conclude that a Creator in whose results I recognise such infinite goodness, such supreme skill, must have lacked that perfect freedom which would have enabled perfect wisdom to produce a perfect world. But, as you probably know, King Alphonso's remark has been justified by later discoveries. The

cosmical scheme assumed by the astronomy of his age, to which he applied his censure, was complicated in the extreme; and it was of that complicated scheme that he spoke so contemptuously. We have since learned that that scheme was utterly unreal; that the real system is so free from those supposed complications and so marvellously perfect in the attainment of gigantic varied results by a very few simple laws, that human wisdom stands astounded not more at the magnificence of the result than at the wonderful absence of complication in the means. In fact the Creator has worked as the king would have had Him work, only with of course infinitely greater skill and simplicity than the royal critic of the Ptolemaic system could have imagined."

"So simply," answered Sterne, "that I think the Universe might very possibly have dispensed with Him altogether."

"You remember, of course," said Dalway, "the argument that if the perfection of the universe implies a Creator, the still greater perfection of the Creator implies that somebody must have created Him?"

"I remember it," answered Cleveland, "but it does not bear on my argument. I admit that had the Universe, the Cosmos, existed from eternity in its present form—or rather, if we do not know that it has not so existed—we could hardly prove a Creator. My demonstration, as I think it, rests on the fact that the Universe having gradually reached its present state must have been subject to the operating forces only for a given time—must have been once inert. It had a beginning. That is the basis of my reasoning. Now we do not know, we have no reason to suppose that the Creator



had a beginning; and therefore my argument—which applies to the Cosmos not as so wonderfully constructed, but as constructed out of original chaos devoid of force,—has no application to a Being, or supposed Being, who may for aught we know have had no beginning but existed from all eternity.”

“There is, however,” said Gerard, “one logical difficulty which applies to the Creator as well as to creation. The past duration of the Universe as an orderly Cosmos, or as something progressing towards such a Cosmos, long as it must have been, is a mere point of time in the supposed eternal life of its alleged Author. If He existed for infinite ages before He chose to create, what motive could have led Him to create at one time rather than at another? Could there have been such a motive without supposing some caprice or change in Him; seeing that the original *inertia* you conceive yourself to have proved forbids any such change in the conditions of matter as may have made creation easier at one time than at another? The inert does not change.”

“I do not think much,” replied Cleveland, “of that extremely subtle and metaphysical reasoning. I will only say that there may have been conditions either in the matter or in Him who ordered it that fixed the date of creative activity. We are simply incompetent to go back beyond the beginning of motion or of the laws which produce motion; and as to such subtleties in general I apply to them what seems to me to be more nearly true than most proverbs:—*Quand celui qui parle n'entend rien, et celui qui écoute n'entend plus, alors c'est métaphysique.*”

“As you know,” returned Sterne, “I think your con-

tempt and dislike of metaphysics very ill-founded. But I would suggest to you another objection to your inference of a Creator from what you call 'creation' and I might call development. The actual Cosmos is but one out of an infinite number of conceivable or inconceivable but nevertheless possible arrangements. The laws by which it has been produced are very simple. Why need we assume design or a designer at all? Why should it not be possible that accident has produced the particular arrangement which exists; among some millions more or less of arrangements that might have occurred, and some one of which probably must have occurred? Take your own presumption, that at a given period the universe was a great disorganized inert nebula. Either it must have remained such or it must have gone through some process of change, assumed some sort of definite form, through the agency of one or more forces. I can see no reason why it should necessarily remain in its original chaos for ever. Grant change, force, motion—and these may for aught we know have been generated within itself—at once arises, for aught we know, and indefinite possibility of development: a chance that the original nebula might assume any one of some millions of forms. If it must needs assume some one among these why should not the actual one be mere matter of chance?"

"In the first place," said Cleveland, "I object entirely to your statement that the original motive power might have been generated in the inert mass itself. Inertia cannot generate force, nor can matter without forces already acting on it give birth to motion or undergo change of any kind. Secondly, chance

could hardly produce throughout an enormous mass millions of bodies all pursuing fixed courses which never interfere with one another, under laws apparently similar in all cases. Briefly, I can conceive chance giving us a chaos of any one shape rather than another, perhaps conceive chance reducing a Cosmos into chaos; but I doubt if any human imagination can really conceive that chance could produce a Cosmos out of chaos."

"Not directly," replied Sterne. "Of course it is plain that the Cosmos is governed, and has in all likelihood been reduced to order, not by chance but by law. What I meant to say was this; that considering the extreme simplicity of the laws actually operating (and I believe that men of science are now inclined to suspect that all laws and all forces will ultimately prove reducible to one law and one force) it may be possible that chance imposed law and gave motion out of which the actual Cosmos has resulted."

"I think," said Vere, "that you turn the argument upside down. The simpler the machinery by which results of admitted greatness and magnificence—perfect order throughout a system embracing millions of members—are attained, the clearer and more striking the evidence of organizing intellect. In human mechanics we esteem most highly the man who produces the greatest and most complicated effects by the simplest means; not him who attains his object by a complication of means proportionate to the grandeur and multiplicity of the effects. We move in invention sometimes from the complicated to the simple, sometimes from the simple to the

complicated; but in the latter case it is always to attain new and greater results that we increase the complexity of our machinery. Given the result, the highest task of intellect is to attain it by the simplest methods."

"Granted," said Sterne. "But I deny that we have any right to infer design from order merely because we ourselves can only produce order by design. Our own peculiar nature, as intelligent will-possessing agents, naturally induces us to infer Intelligence and Will from any result at all resembling those which we produce by Will through Intelligence; and there is some such resemblance between the Cosmos and the finest results of human invention. But the naturalness of the inference does not prove its justice. I must turn against its inventors the favourite Christian illustration of the vanity of scepticism:—that Man is but the fly perched on some little cog in a vast body of machinery, inferring from that tiny fragment the character of a whole manufactory-ful of complicated mechanism. We know that we produce orderly effects in a particular way and by certain means. But we are only the inhabitants of one out of millions upon millions of worlds. What right have we to infer from our own single experience what may be the case in other worlds and other systems? Still more may I say, what right have we to infer from our own little experience in this tiny fragment of the vast Cosmos the nature of the agencies by which the Cosmos as a whole was achieved?"

"Perhaps," said Vere, "Cleveland's argument is not so strictly demonstrative as it seems to me cogent and

convincing. Complicated order not produced by Intelligence may not be demonstrably impossible, but it is to us inconceivable. Cleveland may be wrong in thinking that his argument *proves* a Creator in the sense in which we say that Euclid's reasoning proves that two circles can only touch each other in one point. But I think he has proved that *human reason* can assign no other origin to the universe than the will of a supreme personal Intelligence. In short, if we are to think on the subject at all, we must think of a personal Creator. Impersonal creation may be abstractedly possible; but it is humanly unthinkable."

"In truth," said Gerard, "we must all agree upon one point. We can know only what is or is not thinkable by intelligence resembling our own. We cannot logically and certainly infer that the unthinkable is the impossible; because the conditions that limit our own thought may be applicable only to intelligence like our own. There *may* be Intelligence not like our own. There *may*, again, be Powers not intelligent, yet working out what we call a systematic scheme under some law of which we can have no conception. At the same time for practical human purposes the unthinkable *is* the impossible. We are compelled by the law of our own nature to disbelieve that which we cannot conceive: therefore if Cleveland have, as I am inclined to think, reduced Sterne to admit that a Cosmos developed out of chaos within a finite time by other than a personal intelligent creative power involves conclusions unthinkable by man, he has carried the argument as far as human reason can carry it; nay, *has* proved the truth of his doctrine as perfectly as Euclid has proved

anything. We can no more think an impersonal intelligence than we can think a right-angled triangle in which the square of the hypotenuse shall not be equal to the squares of the two other sides."

"At least," said Sterne, "you must admit that the Design argument, if it have any force at all, holds good only in the form wherein, and to the extent to which, you have applied it. Darwin has shown that adaptation does not prove design."

"How so?" said Dalway.

"Because," answered Sterne, "he has shown, or rather perhaps has caused us for the first time clearly to recognize, that adaptation is an absolute condition of existence. Thousands of unadapted forms may have striven to exist for every one adapted form that has come into being and endured; for only that which was adapted to the general order of the world around it could survive."

"I have always regretted," said Vere, "to notice the hostile attitude which nearly all my clerical brethren and the great majority of Christian controversialists have assumed towards the theory of Evolution as a whole. There is indeed one part of that theory, as (by implication at least) presented by its author, which is absolutely incompatible with Christianity, or with any form of religion; I mean the apparent assumption, running through the whole of Darwin's own writings and through those of the great majority of his supporters, that variations have been 'accidental;' not directed by law towards the fulfilment of a definite preconceived purpose."

"I think," interposed Cleveland, "that you should

make an exception in favour of Wallace, who is quite as well entitled as Darwin himself to the credit of the discoveries on which the doctrine of Evolution is founded, and who might equally claim the authorship of the doctrine itself. He has made certain reservations which seem to me to suggest that he, at least in the case of Man, recognizes a directing hand working through Evolution and Natural Selection to a distinct end."

"I did not," replied Vere, "notice such a difference between Wallace and the other Evolutionists; but then I have not read Wallace's later remarks on the evolution of Man, in which, as I am informed, he strives to show that man could not have been produced from an anthropoid ape by that kind of small variations seized upon and turned to account by Natural Selection, of which Darwin makes such extensive and exclusive use.\*

\* Mr. Wallace's points are, roughly stated, these :

1. That the brain of the lowest savage is nearly as large (8:9) as that of the highest European race; whereas the actual use made of it in savage life is very small indeed compared with the mental exercise of which civilized man has daily need. The Australian or Fuegian hardly requires much more brain than the orang-outang or gorilla—hardly achieves much more than the latter. Yet the brain of the lowest man is to that of the highest ape as, say  $7\frac{1}{2}$  to 3. Now Natural Selection cannot improve an organ beyond the immediate need for its exercise; cannot give what is not wanted. Nature, acting without guidance, (without contemplation of a higher indefinitely distant purpose of perfection such as implies a directive Intelligence), could not give primitive Man a brain disproportionate to his primitive needs. Put in figures the argument would run briefly thus—

a. Savage brain : civilized brain :: 8 : 9 : brute brain ::  $7\frac{1}{2}$  : 3

b. Savage need or use of brain : civilized :: 4 : 9 : brute :: 4 : 3.

Evolution must have made the two series of proportions (a and b) identical.

2. That the loss of hair on the back is one of the oldest because most universal distinctions of humanity. Yet, even in Tropical climates, this must have been a disadvantage. The hair of the ape is a great protection for which savages try to find substitutes. Natural Selection would have increased and not removed it.

What I meant however, generally, was this. It is just as easy and just as satisfactory, from the standpoint of Theism, to suppose that the Creator created by law from the beginning, as to suppose that He worked a miracle at first which it has never been necessary to repeat—easier than to think that He has worked a number of miracles at each geological revolution. From the first moment when I fully understood the general purport of the theory of Evolution I was inclined to regard it as indicating (errors apart) the most probable, the most consistent, and the most beautiful explanation of the Creator's scheme and method of operation. To suppose—as is apparently implied by the first chapters of Genesis if taken in a strict and literal sense—that the Almighty produced the world at once, in something like its present shape, out of nothing, had always seemed to me unreasonable; even had not the idea been clearly inconsistent with the geological record. Such is not, so far as we can discern it, the Divine method. It is easy to imagine violent convulsions at certain stages—not frequent interruption of those slowly working laws which we trace throughout animate and inanimate Nature. Astronomers tell us that if their last views be sound the stars, star systems, planetary systems, have been created gradually through the operation of natural forces. Geologists tell us that our world was probably once a red-hot glowing globe; if it were not, at some yet more distant period, a sphere of still hotter vapour extending at least to the present orbit of the moon. We see, or think we

3. The earlier steps towards the formation of the savage foot in lieu of the ape's prehensile hind paw must have involved pure unmixed disadvantage. Natural Selection can only preserve variations immediately advantageous to the variant.



see, the Creator working out the present shape, crust, vegetation, animal life of this planet [to confine ourselves to the earth] by natural forces, in that very gradual manner so impossible to the impatience of short-lived mortals, but so evidently congenial to the mind which is *patiens quia aternus*. It seems therefore incongruous and inconsistent to suppose that He suddenly and by a pure effort of will superseded the action of all intermediate agencies and known physical forces, and filled earth, air, and sea with life such as we see it at present. It is infinitely more accordant with all we know of His methods—perhaps with what we ought to have inferred from His omnipotence and His eternity—to conceive that He worked out the present innumerable variety of species as He has worked out everything else. We know moreover that there must have been an age, nay, a long series of ages, during which man was not a denizen of this earth; and yet earth, sea, and air were filled as now with active joyous life. I could never see any reason for regarding Evolution with the same kind of angry frightened hostility that was shown by our predecessors towards each successive advance of science; from the first appearance of the Copernican theory of the Universe down to the last discoveries of geology. I suppose, however, that the aspect of Evolution which really disturbed the orthodox mind was a more or less conscious inference that, if Man had been developed out of some anthropoid ape, it was impossible to see at what point he could have become an immortal being. Yet this difficulty after all only applies to the race at large the puzzle so constantly urged upon us as regards the individual. We cannot guess at what moment the

individual man becomes a living soul. It is barely possible to suppose that a full-grown soul is introduced into the unconscious embryo when first the maternal sensations acknowledge the presence of a second life within. I believe that doctors consider that no real change then takes place even in the physical character of the *ovum*—that it is no more alive then than it was before. It is almost equally difficult to believe that the soul is introduced at the moment when the infant draws its first breath; since such a supposition, as has been pointed out by more than one thoughtful observer and by some earnest Christians, involves the assumption that ‘it depends on a maternal movement or a clumsy midwife whether the infant shall be an immortal being or a senseless clod.’ Take the Darwinian hypothesis at its worst, and it only presents to us the same puzzle in regard to mankind at large. Of course, if Mr. Darwin or any of his adherents could *prove* that our species had been developed from another by a series of infinitely small steps preserved by Natural Selection out of an infinite number of variations tending in all directions equally, they would render the interposition of directive Intelligence less essential. But this is precisely what they have failed to prove as regards species in general, and this is the weak point of their whole hypothesis. The links are missing *everywhere*. Now it is easy enough to believe that, from the imperfection of the geological record, we should have only one or two complete series, that all the others would be broken into fragments, and but one or two out of a thousand infinitesimal links, in most cases of development, presented to us. The truth, however, is that we have not a single

series such as Darwin supposes; nay, that we have not even the fragments of any such series. The utmost that the Evolutionists have found is a form remotely intermediate here and there between some families confessedly related as between the pig and the horse types; but I am not aware that the geological record has anywhere given them, for example, anything truly intermediate between the ass and the horse, or even between the zebra and the quagga."

"You press your argument too far," interposed Cleveland. "The links that trace the pedigree of the entire horse genus, for example, up to a little ungulate no bigger than a fox are, according to the last geological reports, clear enough and frequent enough to be indubitable."

"Ay, but," rejoined Vere, "they are not continuous. They prove Evolution, but not Darwinism—creation by birth, not development by an infinite series of infinitesimal accidents. These discoveries do not militate in the least against what seems to me, even on Darwin's own facts, the far more probable assumption of a law directing variation by defined steps in definite directions. Moreover, the same set of discoveries indicate that creatures more powerful and more highly organized than their highest successors have died out, and left behind only inferior forms of the same type—as the jaguar has superseded the machcerodus, as all the mighty reptiles have dwindled into insignificant representations. Now a process of degeneration among the *carnivora* would be fatal to the idea of chance variations only preserved when favourable to the varying species: it accords perfectly

with the hypothesis that all variation has been part of one plan, whereof the preparation of Earth for human habitation seems to have been the main end and culminating result. The terrific primeval monsters would have extirpated the non-arboreal *primates* before Man could be born. Again, no instance is given in which half-a-dozen Darwinian links hang together. The species most closely related are, on his theory, hundreds of links apart—and each link probably represents scores of generations. If we are to be guided not by doubtful analogies but by ascertained facts, we must suppose that the variations—instead of being infinitely numerous in all directions and infinitely small—were considerable and comparatively rare; and that they were from the first directed upwards in the scale of development. Even those variations among domestic animals to which Darwin appeals are apt, when closely examined in the light he himself is careful to furnish, to tell against him: very great variations have occurred very suddenly, and have been preserved by human selection for human convenience. But, again, there is a conclusive objection to all close and peremptory reasoning from domesticated to wild animals in respect of accumulated variation. Take the case of a variation which has already occurred, and which man desires to preserve, such as that of the ancon sheep. It can only be saved from speedy extinction by the most careful management, generation after generation, of those animals which most clearly and strongly inherit it. Were the animals of a single flock left to breed at pleasure, even so striking a variation as this would

disappear in a very few years. Now wild animals do breed together without the slightest regard to variations not amounting to specific difference. Had the ancon sheep appeared in a state of nature, even supposing it adapted more closely than the ordinary sheep to surrounding conditions, since the ancons would have bred just as readily with the ordinary sheep as with their own kind, the mere force of inheritance would have extinguished the variety in a very short time. In order that a variety should be preserved, and rendered more and more different from the original form, it would be necessary that a number of creatures of the same species should have varied at once in the same way; and, I think, almost if not absolutely necessary that the varying creatures should have shown a disposition to prefer one another as mates. The tendency of interbreeding to extinguish variety is mere matter of arithmetic, so obvious that the blot was soon hit and frankly acknowledged. Still, Darwin himself and his followers persist in reasoning as if Natural Selection must prevail over this certain and calculable resistant force, and never clearly explain how or why. Or if Darwin does explain it in the passage wherein he acknowledges his original oversight, I fail to understand in what way he means to modify his theory so as to meet the objection: and what perplexes me may equally perplex other readers. Darwin, indeed, insists very strongly on the probable inheritance of variations; but if any special heritability attaches to variations it must be in virtue of some peculiar law directly and specially tending (if not *intended*) to work out the development of species.

If left, to the ordinary forces of inheritance every variation occurring at first in a single animal or in a very few out of a large number must clearly have been extirpated. The variant would have matched with a non-variant and, the forces of inheritance being equal on both sides, one-half the variation would disappear in the first generation, one-quarter alone would remain in the second, one-eighth in the third, and so on. If on the other hand there be—as it seems absolutely essential to Evolution that there should be—a special heritable force in varieties, so that offspring should tend to inherit the variation rather than the original form, this shows the existence of some special favour to variety which can scarcely be attributed to anything else than a law to that effect probably proceeding directly from Intelligent Power which intended from the first that variations should be preserved. Thus it seems to me that, when fairly and carefully viewed on all sides and in all its consequences, the Darwinian evidence itself in so far as we can accept it bears testimony to that intelligent Creative Will, that Superintending Providence which nearly all Darwinians apparently wish to exclude.”

“But,” observed Sterne, “Darwin accounts for the preservation of the variant creatures on the assumption that out of an infinite number of variations in all directions, those only have survived which have been specially adapted to surrounding conditions, and these of course Natural Selection would tend to preserve.”

“Granted,” said Cleveland. “But this only and at most establishes, what Vere would not deny, that there would be a sort of struggle between Natural Selection

and the force of inheritance. Now—if variation give no prepotence in shaping the offspring—it seems quite clear that, admitting the premises of the Evolutionists, the force of inheritance would beat Natural Selection out of the field, except under the most extraordinary and exceptional circumstances. Mind, it is *alleged* that the variations are very small, so as to give but a very slight or trivial advantage in the struggle for existence. In each generation this advantage would be divided by one-half; so that before Natural Selection could effectively avail a number of variants too small to modify the average character, the variation would be extinguished. If one beast in ten thousand gain an advantage which gives it, say, a double chance of life—and this is apparently greater than Darwin admits—this advantage would in the course of four or five generations have been reduced below perceptibility. To render even the development of a race a little superior to its predecessors probable, you must have variation occurring at once in a fraction of the entire number large enough to *tell* almost at once—large enough to make them, after half-a-dozen generations of them had profited by their slightly-increased percentage of survivals, a very considerable proportion of the entire body of the species existing in a given region at the end of that time. This would imply variation by law, simultaneous variation of many individuals, such as Darwin has not yet, if I rightly apprehend the language of his later editions, admitted within the scope of his theory. In one word, accidental individual variations would under the theory of probabilities—which is always true on the large scale—be extirpated by the forces of inheritance before

Natural Selection could act. To render even race-evolution—the production not of a new species but of a distinct breed—possible you must have one or more of three conditions:—prepotence in heredity, numerous variant individuals varying in the same direction at the same time—which surely requires both proof and explanation—or such extensive extirpation and such favour to the variety as would render the few variant descendants of the original variant a large proportion of the entire number of survivors. Considering the enormous numbers of most species, and the very slight amount of supposed variance, the latter hypothesis cannot be admitted; and to allow either of the others is to allow a special law introduced in favour of upward variation: that is to say, strong evidence of *design* to create by evolution.”

“But,” said Gerard, “Darwin does I think admit and even assert, though not perhaps so plainly as to make his meaning quite unquestionable, the prepotence of variants in heredity.”

“I have,” said Cleveland, “studied that point in his writings over and over again, and I can never make out what he does affirm. Considering his great reputation and the general lucidity of his statements, I must suppose that my failure to apprehend his meaning on this point is due to my default and not to his. But while he constantly and repeatedly insists on the power of inheritance to preserve variations, he nowhere explains how he supposes it to act. It is obvious that the mere general force of inheritance would operate as I have said to preserve the average specific character—that is, to extinguish variation; yet Darwin always



assumes that it does act to preserve varieties, and there is certainly some reason to think that he is right. It still seems an irrefragable inference that inheritance can only preserve variations if variations give prepotence in heredity; and that it does give such prepotence I can nowhere find stated in Darwin's writings."

"Whether stated or not," said Gerard, "I think it is pretty clear that at least in many cases that prepotence does exist."

"Certainly," said Cleveland, "if we admit, as I suppose that nearly all of us do, that Evolution has probably been the method of Creation, we must suppose that such prepotence exists: otherwise variations could hardly have been preserved, to the extent which that belief requires, and which facts seem to prove. But the existence of such a prepotence is fatal to that accidental undesigned character which is after all the point of dispute—the doctrine which enlists the feelings of unbelievers in favour of Evolution and excites those of believers against it."

"Why so?" said Sterne. "Why should the existence of a law favouring Evolution prove design any more than the general law of inheritance?"

"Because," said Cleveland, "the greater the number of what I may call exceptional laws, the stronger the evidence in favour of some immediately-acting intelligence which has superimposed those exceptions on the general scheme. The case of the Materialists and Atheists rests mainly on the idea that a few simple laws, such as chance might have imposed, account for everything. If we can show two or three reversals of these general laws, which, being reversals, could not

have been produced by the general laws themselves, we sap the foundations of Materialism. Now the very nature of the reproductive system throughout the vegetable and animal worlds is such as to render the general law of inheritance its obvious and apparently necessary consequence. It would be strange indeed if children did not resemble the parents from whom they have received life and embryonic nourishment. But that they should resemble one parent rather than the other, (unless indeed viviparous offspring always resembled the mother solely or chiefly) would be a perplexity. That they should resemble generally neither mother nor father, but simply that parent which is least like the rest of the species, is utterly unaccountable, except on the hypothesis of a law favouring variation, which could not have originated in the general law it contradicts. The case is closely analogous to that strange exception in the case of water to the general law that density increases with cold, upon which exception the existence of temperate climates and the possibility of life depend. There is a general, and so far as I know universal, law that every liquid becomes denser—more compressed, and therefore mass for mass heavier—as its temperature diminishes towards the point of solidification. This would be I presume a necessary consequence of that which now seems to be almost established as a fact, that heat is a form of molecular motion. Of course the less the motion (implying a certain mutual distance) among the molecules of a particular liquid mass the less the force keeping them apart; the greater would be the liability to compression by the weight of the similar liquid around,

by that of the air, and by the mutual gravitation of the particles. We should assume as a necessary part of this law that water would grow denser as it grew colder, until actual solidification began; when the peculiar structure of ice—with its infinite number of crossing spiculæ and the quantity of air or hollow space enclosed in its mass—would of course render it lighter than water at even a very high temperature. But 'were this the case, did the universal law that density in liquids is inversely proportional to heat hold good of water down to the point of freezing, no life could exist in any body of water liable to freeze; and almost certainly no life could exist on earth. Each stratum of water as it cooled would sink, so that before freezing began the whole body of water must be reduced to 32° Fahr.; then the whole mass would freeze almost instantaneously, beginning at the bottom. Such congelation of the entire mass of seas, lakes, and even rivers, under sharp and prolonged frost would render the greater part of the temperate zones uninhabitable, and would probably so affect the general temperature of the earth's surface that even the torrid zone would be rendered too cold for life. This is prevented, as we all know by an extraordinary and apparently unparalleled interference with the general law. Through this interference water reaches its greatest density at about 39° Fahr., in consequence whereof the water colder than this floats at the top, and freezing there prevents the lower strata of water from parting with their surplus warmth to the freezing air, because ice is an exceedingly bad conductor of heat. Here you have, as in the supposed case of heritable prepotence in varia-

tion, a direct reversal of a general rule, which reversal cannot be traced to the operation of any other general law. In the one instance the exception is essential to the existence of life; in the other it seems essential to the method of creation which we have every reason to assume was actually employed in the development of animal and vegetable species. Such unaccountable exceptions, introduced exactly where they are essential to the highest class of ultimate creative results, surely force upon an impartial and thoughtful mind the conviction that those results are *not* the work of chance; that they were foreseen from the first, and their accomplishment from the first provided for by an Intelligent Will which we cannot but regard as personal."

"I am not sure," rejoined Sterne, "that the exception, any more than the general rule, proves intelligent direction. Grant that the two interferences or reversals, as you call them, were necessary to the particular results that have been attained or have taken place; their absence might have been compatible with other results equally satisfactory in which other beings might have seen just as strong or as weak evidence of Creative foresight as you discern in the actual adaptation of things."

"Of course," returned Cleveland, "neither Vere nor I expect to convert in the course of an evening's conversation a man like you; who had begun to study the theological aspect of these questions when we were boys at school, and has never since ceased to study them. I do think, however, that when you come to reconsider this matter, you will see that the two points I have mentioned are very telling arguments in the general

controversy between us. It does not follow that you should think them conclusive; but I shall be surprised if you persist in thinking that the existence of exceptional laws very narrowly limited in the midst of a scheme of very simple and almost always absolute laws, is not a grave argument in favour of an intelligent Law-giver; or that the absolute necessity of such laws to the existence of the present and past life of the earth in its infinite forms does not *prima facie* indicate, though it may fail to demonstrate, the origin of the actual state of things in the design of a Creator who, ages on ages before life existed upon this earth, had not merely foreseen and intended, but carefully provided and prepared for its ultimate existence and variety."

"I should add," said Vere, "that we can find in geological history proof, or at least strong presumption of similar foresight of and preparation for the culmination of terrestrial life in man, and even in civilized man. The world was through countless ages prepared first for the advent of humanity, secondly, for its development into the present exalted intelligent being and life of the Aryan race. Geology tells us that at first even the lower forms of terrestrial animal life were developed into a power, size, and destructive force incompatible with the safety of a creature so weak as the human savage.\* Before mammals appeared at all, the reptile kingdom had reached in its highest forms a terrible if clumsy grandeur. The great saurians seem to have been more powerful and formidable beings than any now existing. Though of a lower character, they must have been capable of destroying the lion or the tiger as easily as these could destroy a Hottentot or a Tasmanian.

These creatures were lords of earth and ocean for an indefinite period; but they were swept away so completely that there remains nothing in the now living world to represent them save a few forms of which almost all are harmless and very small—lizards, tortoises, and the like. Then came the lower and then the higher mammals; and some at least of the most formidable among these, if not the cave-tiger or the mammoth, were probably extinct before man had so spread over the earth as to come in collision with them, save at a few isolated points. There seems every reason to believe that the first human or semi-human families must have been developed or come into being in regions where they were somehow protected from creatures with which at that time they could not possibly have coped."

"And," observed Cleveland, "Wallace rightly points out that most of the changes which have according to the Darwinian theory distinguished Man from the anthropoid apes would be at first causes of weakness, disadvantages in the struggle for existence. Man's denudation of the hairy covering possessed by the apes must have been a terrible disadvantage. Grant, as I believe, that the first men probably inhabited an isolated oceanic continent, like Australia, in which the gorilla or some similar creature would be their most formidable competitor; from which the mightier beasts of prey were excluded by wide stretches of ocean, and which was situated within the tropics. Yet even here the absence of hair alone must have tended to the destruction of the new variety, not because they needed the warmth it gave but because

in such regions the rains are heavy and endure for weeks at a time. Now we are told that the hair of the anthropoids is so arranged as to throw off the moisture against which hairless man would be defenceless. The loss of prehensile power in the foot must have been another very grave disadvantage, ill compensated by a power to walk erect which, if slowly developed, must at first have placed man for a long period on a lower level of defensive and offensive strength, rendered him slower and feebler than those powerful anthropoid apes among whom we are to seek his supposed ancestors. Only in case the brain underwent a very rapid development, compensating these losses—inconsistent with that minute variation which is one of the two dogmas in dispute—could the change from the ape to the human savage have been favoured or even tolerated by Natural Selection. And an Anthropoid with such a brain, preserving also the hair and the prehensile foot, would have prevailed over Man. Again, primitive Man could not have risen above the lowest state of almost bestial savagery or coped with powerful beasts till he had developed at least the power of shaping as well as of using missile weapons; and this involves a superiority over the Apes slight in fact, but enormous in comparison with Darwin's infinitesimal steps—one which according to Evolutionists it would take centuries of centuries to accomplish. If that step was not made *per saltum* Man would have perished before he was really born as Man, if only by his inferiority to the one animal order which could have given birth to him. Indeed, I doubt whether the lowest savages are, in power of survival, the equals of the gorilla. Such a sudden leap,

apparently involving several simultaneous changes, cannot be admitted without shaking to its foundations that doctrine of gradual imperceptible evolution on which Materialism is now resting its entire edifice of incredulity. Before Man could have become a hunter—and his existence must have been utterly precarious, if it were possible, till he became at least a hunter—he must have been raised so high above his ape-ancestors as to be able not merely to invent something like the bow or the boomerang, but to shape them with flint tools. The extreme difficulty of making these tools themselves effective, and of working out with them anything that could render him master even of a fauna from which the *carnivora* were excluded, implies an intelligence and a mental skill very decidedly superior to any which our ablest training could develop in the largest-brained ape. It is remarkable, again, that this supreme step or leap was taken from a standpoint by no means the highest in the animal world; the elephant and the dog being apparently much wiser and more teachable than the highest apes. It is difficult then to comprehend the development even of the hunting savage without calling in a creative direction and an extraordinary combination of rapid change with favouring and protecting circumstances such as almost amounts to a miracle. But, again, man must have remained a hunter, and a hunter unaided by dogs, unless the animal world had been prepared before-hand to help him. To the second step in human existence, the first step in civilization, tameable animals were necessary; and we find accordingly that before man appeared on the earth the sheep and



the cow had been developed for his food in the second stage of his progress: the horse, the ass, the camel, the elephant, placed at his disposal as beasts of burden; the wild ancestors of the dog prepared to assist him in the chase and to guard his home and flocks, and endowed with a docility rare, exceedingly rare, among animals generally. He must have been endowed almost from the first with a power, attractive and dominating, which distinguishes him from all other creatures, and renders him even in his lowest known condition lord of all around him. Here we have an adaptation directly conflicting with Darwin's strongest and most emphatically asserted tenet; viz.—that no instinct or quality is given to one animal for the benefit of another. I think myself that the relations between the aphid and the ant which milks it conflict with this tenet. But with that loyal frankness which always characterizes his reasoning Darwin himself has pointed out that variation and Natural Selection could not possibly have adapted one animal to the use of another as so many animals have been in my view adapted beforehand to the use of Man. If, then, there are signs of an adaptation of the animal world to the use of Man, if certain creatures were endowed with a capacity for domestication—a docility and comparative gentleness—useless to them in their wild state but very useful to him—if whole families were reduced to their lowest forms in order to make room for him—then, according to Mr. Darwin himself, the theory of Evolution breaks down. I should not say that it breaks down, but only that it requires to be modified and supplemented by

the admission of the conditions most repugnant to many of its votaries—a law or plan embracing the life of earth as a whole, dealing with all living forms and all ages, governing alike the production and preservation of varieties not casual and self-centred, but all tending to combine in one harmonious whole; a directing Intelligence working through such a law towards foreseen and adequate results; and making every modification of every living form conduce in its time and place to the realization of one definite purpose—the culmination of Life in the intellectual capacities, the practical powers, the conscious free-will, the moral responsibility, the marvellous destinies and limitless aspirations of Man. Again, the vast material advance, the enlargement of human power, characteristic of our own age, would hardly have been possible without coal, and would have been very difficult if coal and iron had not been placed so frequently in close proximity to one another. If, then, coal was in any sense meant for man's use, ages on ages, change upon change were employed in preparing for human civilization. Forest growths went on for centuries; vast wooded areas were submerged, raised, submerged again; and this process was repeated in a hundred distant places, and often in each place a score of times, thousands of centuries before the first man appeared on earth, in order that the civilized man of this age and of future ages might be possible. If any one of these favouring circumstances stood alone we might fairly regard it as an accident. But that mere chance or coincidence should have accumulated such a combination of favouring

circumstances through so long and complicated a process for the benefit of a single one of the innumerable animal species that live or have lived upon the earth, no one who has studied the theory of probabilities will, I think, be disposed to believe. I would add then to my essential qualification of the Darwinian theory—Intelligent direction—two signal exceptions; implying—not a miracle, in the sense in which we employ the word as signifying a palpable interruption or violation of natural laws but—a Providential direction and combination of results attained by and through those laws into the form of a preconceived design; a design only intelligible or articulate when, all its parts furnished and fitted to their place, the crowning flower of all appeared. Man must have been developed by a special process, because at this point a being dependent on body had to produce one dependent on brain, and until the latter dependence was fully provided for, the weakness of the body might be fatal; hence a necessity for wider and swifter steps than Evolutionists are willing to allow. And further, both the inanimate and animate worlds were, contrary to the theory of the Materialists, specially and curiously adapted to the needs of man ages before he appeared on earth; and to human civilization while Man, according to the Evolutionist, was, and was destined still to be for countless centuries, a mere savage or barbarian.”

“As a matter of evidence, however,” said Vere, “we trace no signs of a general barbarism enduring for ages before the earliest civilization. The earliest traces of man yet discovered are of civilized or semi-civilized

communities; and where barbarism prevailed during the historic period, as well as under the remains of historic empires, we find the ruins of civilizations older than the oldest traditions of their local successors; older, perhaps, than the oldest existing savagery."

"There is," continued Cleveland, "another point on which I have always been disposed to distrust or dispute the Darwinian system. Its author declares that the infinite and varied beauty of nature was nowise intended for human gratification; that the bright colours of the flowers, the exquisite shape and painting of insects, the bright hues of birds, were all intended exclusively for the advantage of the species themselves. The bright-coloured flowers, for instance, only acquired that colour in order to attract insects by which they might be fertilized. But one large blotch of bright colour would have accomplished this end just as certainly as those exquisite varieties of tint and brilliance, those wonderfully perfect and as wonderfully different outlines, those marvellous combinations and arrangements of varied and harmonized shades and hues, which render flowers so delightful to human sense. If intended merely to attract the insects by which they are fertilized, the flowers afford incomparably the most striking instance of lavish, I might almost say of wasted, endowments whereof Nature affords so many examples. Once admit that they were intended to gratify the intelligent perceptions of Man, or that beauty is in the Creator's mind an end in itself, and we can understand why flowers have been rendered not merely bright but exquisitely beautiful in form as well as in arrangement and variety of colour. The Darwinian theory accounts for the white

or purple convolvulus; it utterly fails to explain that perfection of shape, that delicacy of texture, which render the convolvulus one of the most microscopically perfect and signally beautiful of natural objects. And the same may be said of every flower in which more colours than one are blended, and of every flower in which the arrangement of the colours adds greatly to their beauty though nothing to their singularity and conspicuity. So, again, of the song and the plumage of birds. The instinct of copulation is so strong that we can hardly suppose either one or the other necessary or even materially useful in winning mates: certainly it is difficult to suppose that the service they may have rendered in sexual selection at all compensates the extra peril to which they expose the creatures so distinguished. Thus, again, I ask for what purpose the Bird of Paradise was gifted with its marvellously beautiful but certainly very inconvenient mass of plumage? In one word, to minds confined within the Darwinian theory, most of the beauty of nature is unintelligible or explicable only by far-fetched and improbable subtleties; at best wasteful, often injurious. It is explained at once if we suppose a Creator who either delights in beauty Himself, or wished to gratify the senses, and through their gratification to elevate the character, of His noblest earthly creature. Surely the abundance of beauty is a powerful argument in favour of the religious theory which does explain—as against the Materialistic hypothesis which utterly fails to explain, nay, which conflicts with—one of the most striking and universal characteristics of the actual world.”

“Of course,” replied Sterne, “we cannot possibly tell

what pleasure beauty may give to the supposed Creator Himself or to beings to whose senses the beauties of earth may be perceptible, though the inhabitants of earth cannot in return perceive them. But as regards man I am inclined to doubt whether the delight found in natural beauty is not confined to a comparatively small proportion of the species, and these chiefly resident in countries where natural beauty is sparsely bestowed. The natives of those tropical lands in which the very wilderness and jungle surpass in verdure, and sometimes in splendid colouring, the beauty of the finest English gardens seem to care very little for, indeed scarcely to perceive, the splendours with which the Creative Power of your creed has strown the earth, the sea, and the air around them. Surely if an intelligent Creator had meant these beauties to gratify man, He would have placed them chiefly in the lands inhabited by the men most capable of enjoying them!"

"You forget," said Cleveland, "that the Creator is *patiens quia eternus*. One can hardly doubt that in time the finest, most fertile, most beautiful regions of the earth will be occupied by the races most capable of turning them to account and of enjoying the loveliness of their scenery and the geniality of their climate. As to the other point you have rather implied than expressed—the limited number of those even among the highest races who really derive much pleasure from natural beauty—it admits of a double answer. In the first place, it is quite evident that the Creator thinks not only of the greatest number but of the greatest happiness. He has ordained that myriads of inferior creatures shall minister to the pleasure or to the life of

one superior; and it is quite in accord with our experience of His methods that millions of men of comparatively low nervous organization should pass a life enjoyable within their power of enjoyment, but still poor and mean, in order that one life of a higher kind might be filled with all the delight and raised to the highest perfection of which it is capable. Secondly, enjoyment of natural beauty is in great measure a question of education; and education spreads, and will spread more and more rapidly, generation after generation, among the higher races of mankind, till within a century or two every individual man and woman in every Aryan nation will be as thoroughly educated as those who receive the best education of the present day."

"I daresay," said Sterne, "that Darwin's views will in the course of a few years need qualification and addition, even greater than they have received already at his own hands. But I certainly do not see in your few, and therefore to me very dubious, instances of what you are pleased to consider preparation or adaptation of the lower and previous world to human uses, anything likely to enforce so fundamental a modification of the Evolutionary system as that involved in the introduction of a personal Creator and a deliberate direction of variation in an upward course. Still less can I suppose that the mere excess of beauty in nature, over and above what you admit to be necessary for practical purposes, can furnish foundation for the tremendous inference you would rest upon it. You must remember that our sense of beauty is in great measure a sense of adaptation; the forms, hues, and

arrangements you so greatly admire have in some cases known and obvious uses, while in others it is only reasonable to suppose that uses not yet known may be hereafter ascertained. Then again as to shape, we admire chiefly certain defined geometrical forms; and it is at least probable that these forms are not produced for the sake of their beauty, but are simply those natural in each instance to the species and traceable to its laws of growth. In short, much of what you call beauty may be an accident of law. Much of it, also, is certainly or almost certainly the result of this obvious but often forgotten fact—that man, and man's senses, are adapted to the world as it is; that he is himself a part of that system whose other parts he admires. It is just conceivable that to a being of different nature from a different world not a little of what we call beauty might appear as supreme ugliness. Again, colour has no real existence; it is merely an impression produced on the eye by certain reflections of light, and depends therefore for its power of causing pleasure on the simple fact that the eye, whether of man or of insects, has been necessarily by the very force of evolution adapted to light in all its forms, of which colour is one."

"The eye itself," answered Cleveland, "is one of the most extraordinary marvels of creation, and one of those least easily accounted for by Evolution. It is perfectly easy to explain on the Darwinian hypothesis how a simple membrane, at first feebly sensitive to light, should have gradually been developed to a much higher degree of sensitiveness; as, for example, the



dog's sense of smell has been, probably long before he became a dog in the modern sense, developed to a degree of power simply incomprehensible to ourselves. But what is not easy, what is scarcely conceivable, on mere principles of Evolution—what can hardly be accounted for by accidental variations favoured by Natural Selection—is the combination of a multitude of independent variations into one marvellously perfect organ. It is essential to the Evolutionary explanation that each single step should have been distinctly beneficial. In the case of a complicated organ produced by the very gradual modification of several different parts, simultaneously if you will but separately, this explanation breaks down. The separate modifications supposed would have been useless: even if simultaneous, their smallness, as assumed by Evolutionists, would have rendered them severally too insignificant to have been preserved by Natural Selection; and the simultaneous variation of many different and independent parts to form ultimately one perfect organ—perfect as yet perhaps only in an approximate sense—would of itself imply directive Intelligence working to a remote end by gradual changes not in themselves immediately useful. Unfortunately, I am not possessed of the anatomical knowledge which would enable me to apply this obvious truth to the structure of the eye in its wonderful detail; but what I have read on the subject has strongly impressed upon my mind the idea that the enormous difference between the eye of the mammal as it now exists and the rude semi-sensitive membrane in which Evolution sees its origin, has been

accomplished by the development of several parts, no one of which would have been of great use by itself, but which in their joint result have given us the wonderful organ through which the most valuable of our senses operates."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*THE HAND ON THE HELM.*

THE weather, which had confined us to the house, having cleared after noon, and the bright green lawn and trees already showing the varied tints of autumn inviting us forth, we joined Mrs. Cleveland and Mrs. Dalway, who were before us on the terrace. They took, however, no part in the following conversation, and some previously arranged drive speedily called them away.

"I have been much struck," said Gerard, "by the reasoning of a work to which Cleveland first called my attention—Mr. Bagehot's 'Physics and Politics.' It so clearly works out the Evolutionary scheme as applied to pre-historic human history—if I may use such a phrase—that not only does it leave on my mind a fixed impression of the complete validity of the argument so far as it is carried, but, like most really deep and thoughtful reasonings, suggests corollaries and inferences that prolong the line of its logic both backward and onward. Till I read it, I had been inclined to accept the doctrine on which Cleveland lays so much stress, that Providential government is clearly to be traced in human history as well as in individual lives. But, though there are chapters, and long ones, of history to

which that doctrine still seems to afford the best and the only connected clue; I am often forced to feel that Bagehot has done for it what the Origin of Species did for the Biblical Cosmogony—doomed if not destroyed it.”

“Before passing to the general question of Providential Government in history,” returned Verè, “I should like to appeal to the personal experience of individuals as to the lessons of their own life. Is it, or is it not, true that in proportion as after middle life we look back on our own career and fortunes with careful and unbiassed scrutiny, we find that Providence has been educating, rewarding, punishing us in our individual character; and this so distinctly that in many cases it seems impossible to resist the belief in a definite purpose applied to our lives, or worked out therein, by a wisdom superior to ours and a Power outside of ourselves? Of course, while our lives remain unfinished there must be many parts of the education and discipline we have undergone the purpose of which we fail to recognize, precisely because it *is* incomplete. But there are also parts of our life-story which are in some sense finished; and as a rule do we not find that we can trace in these not merely what is called poetic justice but actual application of events to correct our own special faults?”

“I cannot say,” rejoined Sterne, “that my experience would confirm your view. My whole life was saddened, my enjoyment of youth and health destroyed before I was five-and-twenty by the death of a child-sister—the only creature I loved. That loss certainly did me nothing but harm in regard to my own personal nature and inner character. It caused me to devote myself

much more resolutely and unflinchingly than I might otherwise have done to public objects; but then every one of those objects would appear to you, and probably to most of us here present, simply mischievous."

"No," said Vere, "not simply, perhaps not mainly mischievous, even according to our human lights. You have no doubt fought for twenty years against everything that seems to me most essential to human happiness here and hereafter. But I doubt whether you, or the party of which you were one of the most valued leaders, have really exercised any great influence upon religious opinion. In order to avoid all risk of personal offence I will apply my remarks rather to your acknowledged leader than to you. Mr. Holyoake and his supporters were twenty years ago the only influential teachers of avowed Atheism; but in teaching Atheism they made no way. Whatever progress Materialism, which involves practical Atheism, may have silently achieved in the last quarter of a century is due not to so-called Secularism but to misapplied science. On the other hand, the Secularists did one great and most useful work: they achieved the right of free speech not only for the study and the medical lecture-room but for the platform and for the press. They practically repealed the blasphemy laws. The 'Last Trial by Jury for Atheism,' as Mr. Holyoake called the account of his own persecution, was not the last. The last such trial was of a much baser character. A bitter Evangelical bigot, like the chief author of the attack on Mr. Holyoake, might fancy that he did his Church useful if not honourable service in using the missiles of the law to pelt a Socialist lecturer from the platform. But—while

thought and speech were left free in London lecture-halls, and placards wantonly offensive proclaimed in London streets the right of blasphemy—the spirit which, ignoring this public parade of defiance to an obsolete law, vented on a poor Cornish peasant the passions elsewhere curbed by prudence was no less unmanly than un-Christian. To sentence such a man to the punishment of a felon for writing ribaldry on a gate was something more and something worse than mistaken severity; to add cumulative terms of imprisonment one after another to the total amount of two years and a half for each angry phrase spoken to the constable who arrested him was a shameful abuse of the law. Notoriously this could not have been done in London or Lancashire; and Mr. Justice Coleridge should have known that he was giving judicial effect to his own personal feelings, not to the opinion of the Bench at large. The complicity of his son as prosecuting counsel in this proceeding should have shamed the latter from afterwards posing before the public as a champion of religious liberty. Pooley's case has, I hope and believe, made trials for blasphemy impossible in the future. But it never would have produced this result but for the energy and activity of Mr. Holyoake, which dragged the whole story of a petty case conducted at the Cornish Assizes into light, and brought the damaging facts to the knowledge of every reader of an English newspaper. Much of the effect on public feeling was also due to the promptitude with which your party at the same time challenged prosecution in London; and showed that the law so abused in the comparative secrecy of a petty provincial town could not be put in

force in the capital: that bigotry itself dared not trust the verdict of a London jury or bring the merits of its stolen victory to the test of law as interpreted by an impartial Judge under the watchful eyes of the Metropolitan press. Your leader and his adherents have, I believe, done little or nothing for Atheism. You have won a great victory for human liberty, especially for liberty of conscience; and in proportion to the intensity and confidence of my faith in the truth of Christianity is my gratitude to those enemies who secured for it the inestimable advantage of free discussion; who have made it impossible for themselves or any one else again to say that Christianity prevails only because the arguments of its supporters cannot be fully, fairly, equally challenged and answered in public, in the press, and on the platform. Even your own life, then, testifies, in my opinion, to the use that Providence can make of our human errors and our bitterest calamities to forward ends to which our shortsighted exertions may have been intentionally opposed."

"I agree," said Gerard, "with pretty nearly every word you have spoken in regard to the cause of free thought, and the service rendered thereto by Mr. Holyoake, by our friend here, and by one or two others of the same school. But I should take one or two exceptions to your remarks: your censure of the elder Coleridge is just to the letter if, as we both suppose, he used his power to give effect to his individual feelings in a sentence that would not have been passed in London: a sentence which would, I venture to think, have justified any Liberal in either House in moving an address to the Crown for his removal. But it was not

the son's business to prosecute London blasphemers, unless he were briefed and paid to do so. Secondly, whatever the advantage of free speech, I regret that Mr. Holyoake and the gentlemen who then supported him, like Sterne, withdrew from their leadership soon after legal freedom of speech was in effect secured, and left a very different class of men to represent their cause. Not from any sympathy for Christianity, but simply from contempt and loathing for the men, and for the insults utterly wanton and senseless which they lavish on ideas sacred in the opinion of half their countrymen, I could wish that the vulgar Atheists of the present day could be shamed if not coerced rather into decency than into silence."

"You cannot," rejoined Sterne, "fairly make us responsible for those whom you call our successors. They were never cordial or trustworthy allies of ours; and, as you seem to admit, our principal work was done when practical license of speech and thought was secured for all. Again, I must demur to the excuse you prefer for the younger Coleridge. His position as prosecuting counsel in a criminal case, where the accused was at once ignorant to helplessness and undefended, bound him not merely to abstain from taking unfair advantage, but to see that no unfair advantage was taken. Now, the multiplication of counts in the indictment—every one of which, except the first, was an oppressive misapplication of the law, referring to words spoken in anger and almost in private after arrest on the first charge—was just one of those perversions of law which a prosecuting counsel ought to have repudiated when the prisoner was undefended. And again,



it is impossible, remembering the relation between the Judge and the prosecutor, not to hold the son jointly responsible with the father." . . .

"I should be glad," said Vere, "to know that the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas was not guilty of such political insincerity or of such professional misconduct as I had been led to impute to him. Till ardent conviction, generating theological hatred, led him into his one unpardonable fault, the late Judge Coleridge was with good reason respected by the bar and the public and honoured by earnest Churchmen; and I am therefore glad to hear anything that can be alleged in excuse for his son. As a true subject of the Queen, I am glad to hear any vindication of that purity of the judicial ermine whereof all loyal Englishmen are proud and jealous. But I only mentioned that case, and the skill and judgment by which it was made the field of a final victory in the cause of free speech, in answer to Sterne's implied assumption that I must regard the devotion of his life to Secularism as a misfortune, and consequently as anything but a probable indication of Providential guidance. I return to my point. Is it not true that the more closely and carefully we scrutinize our own past history and present character, the stronger and clearer become the indications of Providential guidance, instruction, correction which each of us finds in his own personal experience?"

"As I said just now, I was inclined to accept your doctrine," answered Gerard; "but I could not bear—even for a purpose like yours, whose value I appreciate and whose importance might fairly claim to override all personal resolves—to revert to the very few and very

painful experiences that have exercised a critical influence on my own life."

"And I," said Cleveland, "have been so happy, or at any rate so fortunate in the success that has hitherto attended my own attempt to shape out my life and career for myself, that I have probably on the ground of personal experience less to say in favour of your view than almost any other man could have. Providence has simply allowed me to work out thus far with perfect satisfaction to myself the scheme of life I sketched out before I was one-and-twenty. I could, however, support your view by reference to the experiences of many intimate friends; as I have no doubt that you, from your professional opportunities, were your lips not sealed by professional confidence, could do to a much larger extent. I have seen, for example, characters of dubious promise to all appearance strengthened, improved, I might almost say redeemed, through the consequences not merely of folly but of sin. I remember one instance of this sort, signally illustrating at once the overruling power of Providence and the inscrutability of its methods. Years ago I became acquainted with the character of one then in very early youth, for whom but a single human observer professed warm affection or confident hope. I must own that that one observer was so rarely wrong in instinctive appreciation that the exception almost outweighed the contrary judgment of the rest. Circumstances that seemed sure to consummate the moral mischief resulted, by the very greatness of the peril, in affording what appeared to all the one chance and the best possible opportunity of retrieval. But, some months later, my farsighted friend predicted the

failure of that promising experiment; and predicted it on grounds that seemed the most improbable—‘the weakness of the strong and the follies of the wise.’ In a few years more his mournful prophecy was fulfilled to the letter; fulfilled not only in an irrevocable blunder, but in a very serious fault. Again Providential wisdom baffled human foresight. Of the after-discipline I know nothing, save that it must have been severe; when Providence takes the rod in hand, He strikes hard and strikes home. But the significant lesson of the story is this: that the fault and the folly effected what nothing else had accomplished. Conscious responsibility for wilful error taught patient endurance and loyal acceptance of the consequences in a wholly new and nobler spirit; consciousness of wrong-doing enforced humble, penitent submission to its natural punishment. Sin as well as sorrow has borne its part in the redemption wherein one silent spectator at least believed through pain and fear, through innumerable disappointments, to the last. I could tell, again, of characters saved at critical junctures through what are generally thought the worst and most purely demoralizing of human trials and sufferings. I have again seen many a petulant, wilful, idle lad cured of faults that would have marred his whole career by the discipline of a life regarded as especially dangerous and full of temptations especially fatal to such tempers—the life of the garrison and the camp. Again, my own sacrifice in refusing to sign the Articles cost me nothing but a fellowship, which I did not greatly miss, and nowise affected my career. I had, however, a friend who refused—not like myself when he should have taken his degree but when he

should have matriculated. Not pretending to understand the general theology of the Church, and having no scruple in accepting it, at nineteen, on credit, he took exception to a single Article—that which asserts the theological truth of the three Creeds. It is curious that his refusal was founded in ignorance. He objected only to the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed, saying, ‘I have nothing that deserves to be called a conviction on the theological question, except that I do distinctly disbelieve that my friends and kindred will be damned for not believing what, as I read it, nobody can understand.’ Now it happens that the highest Dissenting authority on the subject, Richard Baxter—the chief and the most moderate of those Caroline Puritans who profited by the Toleration Act—signed this very Article, while taking exception to this very point. He said in substance, ‘I accept the Athanasian Creed in so far as it is a Creed: I do not conceive that by attaching my signature to the statement that as a Creed it is to be believed, I affirm my approval of its anathemas.’ Such an interpretation of the subscription on such authority would have satisfied my friend had he known of it. He was not the less of course a heavy loser by his conscientious conviction. His sacrifice was as great as a youth of his age could well make; for there were not half-a-dozen of his contemporaries to whom Oxford offered a fairer promise of success or a more congenial education; and a fellowship would have been of great value to him. I met him some few weeks ago, and we referred to the subject. He then said that, even apart from the question of conscience, he had little reason to regret his choice. His life would of course

have been utterly different had he gone to Oxford. He would have chosen a different profession, and every relation and incident of his career must have been other than it has been had he entered upon a professional education with an Oxford fellowship at twenty-two instead of being educated at an unendowed University, and having to support himself from the age of one-and-twenty. 'But,' he said, 'I believe that I have on the whole made as much of my life—I should rather say, I have not done, enjoyed or suffered less—than I should in the career which Oxford would have opened to me. My earlier manhood was certainly fuller than it would have been at Oxford of hope and defeat, of pain and pleasure, but it was such as, at the time, I should have preferred; though certainly none of its compensations were such as I could have foreseen. Taking it altogether, I conceive that I have been repaid by an extraordinary Providence even in worldly success; and perhaps more than repaid in all else.' In another case I have seen a single act of self-sacrificing kindness open a direct road to fortune. In all these instances, much that was regarded as misfortune or sacrifice became a Providential instrument of good, not merely in a spiritual but in a plain practical sense, obvious to the world's judgment; while some things, which even those who think much more of the influence of circumstances on character than of mere worldly prosperity would have regarded or did regard as calamities, proved under Providential guidance the greatest of advantages."

"I have seen that happen more than once," said Gerard. "Nothing is more striking to myself, or I should think to all men who have thought much over

their experience of life, than our utter incapacity to know what may and what may not be real good. The Christian proverb that speaks of 'blessings in disguise,' though it has been so used that it offends our ears by the numerous and offensive associations of falsehood and cant which it recalls, is quite as true as its Pagan converse which notes the frequency of '*vota Dîs exaudita malignis.*'"

"There is," said Cleveland, "another saying—one of the few Shakesperian mottoes I greatly admire—the truth of which observation and experience have equally enforced on me. It is, however, historical, and owes only its form to Shakespeare. I mean the dying sentence of Wolsey :

'Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
I served my King, He would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.'

I suppose there are few who, after they have passed middle life have not had bitter reason to recall these words, applying them to some of those for whom they have wrought and suffered most loyally and persistently."

"If there be," said Vere, "one cant that more than any other offends a Christian ear it is the cant of religious sentimentality with which the pages of some novelists essentially anti-Christian and immoral are larded. Among English writers I might name 'Guy Livingstone' and. *Ouida*, especially the former, as signal offenders in this sort. The elder Dumas is a more pardonable because more impulsive and unconscious culprit ; but even his most glaring immoralities

are not so offensive as his penitential outbreaks of mawkish piety. Yet in a conversation between two of the swash-buckler drinking debauched heroes of the *Three Musketeers*, you may remember one phrase—it occurs in the *Vicomte de Bragelonne*—which is worthy of a purer writer than Dumas and a truer nobleman than the Count de la Fère. Do you remember the passage wherein Athos and D'Artagnan discuss the apparent ingratitude of princes; and the former concludes the argument by saying, 'You find, then, that men are often ungrateful, but that God never is'?"

"Are men so very ungrateful?" answered Gerard. "I forget where I found a little verse that reflects my own life-impressions very truly:—

'I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning;  
Alas, the gratitude of men  
Hath oftener left me mourning.'

I have seen the commonest acts of kindness or courtesy—acts which to the doer, and often to the world, seemed mere matters of course under the circumstances—call forth such outbursts of gratitude, sometimes evanescent, but often persistent and devoted, that I have been compelled to ask myself, 'What has been the previous experience of those who are so much surprised at and so thankful for so mere a trifle of human good-will?'"

"Perhaps," said Cleveland, with that half smile which so often perplexed his friends in regard to the sincerity of his sarcastic paradoxes, "it may be possible to reconcile the bitter truth of the prose that concentrates experience into epigram with the 'sweet reasonableness' that finds honeyed utterance in poetry. The over-

whelming thankfulness must have broken from the lips of men; the systematic ingratitude must, I think, have revealed the hearts of women."

"I cannot let that sentence pass save under protest," answered Gerârd. "We both judge women by the exalted standard of exceptional experiences; we have both owed to them no ordinary happiness, and both felt how utterly that happiness would have been wrecked had those who have influenced our lives not transcended immeasurably the average contemporary level of their sex. Consequently, our absolutely opposite habit of thought on this subject is to me a constantly renewed surprise. I have no reason to think women less grateful for recognized kindness than men; unless in so far as they are generally less deeply and permanently impressed by any feelings not instinctive. But if you have encountered, or learned your thought from those who have encountered, a different experience, let me suggest a possible explanation. Gratitude must be called forth by pure unselfish disinterested kindness; and women feel and know how much of that which they receive is not exactly disinterested."

"Possibly," retorted Cleveland. "I could make still better excuses, and by the dozen; but they are excuses, not answers to the charge. Women feel little the kindness they have never missed; the patience, forbearance, guardianship, that they have never been able to exhaust or renounce. Their vanity, pampered from the days of the Round Table to the present, is taught to think soft words, sweet smiles, a kiss or a hand-clasp, ample repayment for the most laborious service, the most costly



sacrifices ; and most of them take care to maintain the value of such rewards by bestowing them charily. Moreover, they are on the whole least grateful for the service that is most disinterested : perhaps it wounds their pride to feel that a man chivalrous enough to incur trouble, loss, and risk for them cannot be made the fool and slave of the passion or sentiment it most gratifies them to inspire."

"It pains me not a little," said Vere, "to hear such language from you. Gerard himself, holding a political creed which is senseless and baseless if it do not rest on a profound belief in the essential truth and justice of human instincts, the general soundness of human nature, is hardly consistent in speaking so doubtfully of the existence of true human sympathy and disinterested kindness. But I cannot understand how you, Cleveland, to whom chivalry is not an ideal but a principle, and courtesy a point of honour, can endure to think or speak the bitter taunts, the contemptuous cynicisms, which reproduce in an English home and Christian age the misogynism of Hellenic corruption and the suspicious jealousy of the Oriental seraglio. Owning your life so happy, what can so embitter your every reference to women with the venom natural to a man whose life feminine temper, caprice, falsehood have ruined ?"

"Chivalry," rejoined Cleveland, "not only tolerated but I suspect presupposed a certain veiled contempt for those to whom it rendered such exaggerated homage. If there had not been understood methods and principles of counteraction in the background, men would not have ventured so to flatter the imperious

caprice and changeful temper of those on whose domestic simplicity and subordination their comfort depended. It is only those who have not to control a spoiled child that can afford to amuse themselves by exciting her petulance and gratifying her whims during an idle afternoon. Even the praise bestowed on Lancelot's 'faith unfaithful' suggests that ordinary knights,—less perfect in the courtesy to which his visible sadness lent a charm that no woman could resist—reserved their deepest devotion for ladies not already won. We may well read the necessities and hard realities of life between the honeyed lines of the troubadours. Even the famous story of the Sieur de Lorges (and especially the approval of his act by a royal knight-errant like Francis I.) shows that the chivalric homage of knight and troubadour was bounded by somewhat narrow limits. Our contemporaries would not think it worth while to snatch a five-shilling glove from under the jaws of raging lion or tiger; but they sometimes show a loyalty that can endure sterner tests without hope of requital and without the applause of a brilliant Court. Men who are called hard and cynical will calmly sacrifice the hopes, endure silently the dreary abnegation, of a lifetime for wife, child, or sister; will give the loyal service of long and painful years as mere matter of course. Such men take ingratitude for granted, without feeling tempted, even for a moment, to throw up the charge that affection has undertaken or Providence imposed. And they need be prepared for such a result; women are never grateful for kindness they have never been allowed to miss, and 'yield their sweetness only to the foot that tramples on them.'"

“I doubt,” said Vere, “whether there be any sort of comparison between the two kinds of devotion. The kind of requital for which the knight-errant looked must generally be out of the question in such rare cases as you describe. For it is only where love of that kind is long secured, or is not sought, that the calm enduring patience which no fault and no ingratitude can disturb is possible. The slightest admixture of passion would introduce, to borrow an illustration from mechanics, an unequal heating and cooling fatal to the even temper and perfect tenacity of the bond; the disappointment of misunderstood or misused affections would wear it out, the strain of persistent ingratitude, the sudden blow of wanton unkindness snap it, the keen acid of bitter feeling eat it through. By your own words it is evident that the mainspring of the devotion you think of is an affection essentially domestic; and the devotion of knight or troubadour was as unlike domestic or even conjugal love as any sentiment well could be.”

“I am not quite sure of that,” answered Gerard. “I conceive that the strongest, most durable, and at the same time most reverential and devoted—nay, I will say most romantic—love is that which has been heated in the furnace of passionate hope, tempered in the earlier years of a perfect marriage, and welded into absolute firmness by the blows of common joy and sorrow. If there be a love now-a-days that would risk the peril of the arena in honour of its object, or bear the strain of long-continued silent sacrifice, it is the love of such marriages as are said truly enough to be made in Heaven.”

He paused abruptly: and a few moments elapsed before Cleveland chose to make his cynical rejoinder.

"You miss the moral of the story if you forget that the lady *threw* her glove into the lists. No marital chivalry, after the honeymoon, would stand such a test. Conjugal love must be returned, in so far at least that the one *qui se laisse aimer* must not show absolute selfishness and reckless insatiate vanity. Wives may love without respect or esteem; husbands seldom or never; and—as she is not here—I may say that if Ida were to throw her most precious possession—except it were one of Cornelia's jewels—from yonder crag, I don't think that the Royal Life Insurance Company would run the slightest risk thereby."

"Probably not," said Vere drily. "The crag falls perpendicularly into twenty feet of water, and you are a very fair swimmer."

"To me," said Dalway, "chivalry, ancient or modern, seems to find its fitting representative in Don Quixote rather than in Bayard. I have so little regard for or interest in any of its forms that I would fain recall you to the point from which you have diverged; the question of Providential Government."

"Chivalry," said Cleveland, "was in itself a signal example of Providential guidance as seen in history. In the decaying civilization of Rome the actual position of woman had become deeply degraded in proportion as her legal equality with man and personal independence were recognized. The relations of sex had ceased to be refined, pure, loyal, or even respectable. Those, therefore, who believe as I do that all true civilization, all national dignity of character, all manhood worthy

the name, have their root in the home, must recognize in Gothic barbarism an essential superiority to the civilization of the Lower Empire. It is obvious that the rude valour of the barbarians, the savage liberty of nations whose every freeman was a soldier, was needed and sufficed to regenerate the coarser and harder elements of the manhood that had died out of Roman and Greek life. To no prophetic discernment could it be equally apparent how the more subtle and refined elements of true manliness—the courtesy, grace, self-command which belong to civilized man—were to be restored; it was even to be feared that they might be permanently extinguished by a barbarian conquest. It was through chivalry that Providence secured the nobler moiety of the necessary revival of decrepit humanity, whereof the other and lower moiety was achieved by Gothic and Teutonic courage. The life of the Middle Ages was a life of incessant warfare, tending indeed to produce a type of human character harder and nobler than any that was left in the Roman provinces, and free from their worst, because most unnatural, vices, but still a type essentially deficient in all the softer elements out of which intellectual culture, social courtesy and moral civilization might once more be developed.”

“Yes,” said Sterne, “and you might add that monasticism did its best to aggravate the evil, as has been already indicated by one or two of the soundest historical critics, by withdrawing from the world and excluding from the function of parentage all those gentler natures to whom a life of warfare was repugnant; at the same time that bigotry exterminated

by fire and faggot whatever intellect of the finer order rebelled against monastic discipline and scholastic divinity."

"If, then," resumed Cleveland, "it had not been for chivalry, the tendency of barbarian conquest would have been to regenerate only in its harder and rougher virtues the effete manhood of Rome. A race of warriors and an age of warfare—where valour, and even ruthless valour, was the virtue of first necessity, and was therefore the virtue held in highest honour—could hardly have been made, as they were silently made, the cradle of modern civilization, unless the influence of women had been restored to a level as high as it had ever reached even in the Roman Republic or in the German forests; unless the domestic relations were not merely to be purified but to be refined and softened. Chivalry, even if regarded as the irrational exaggeration it seems to Dalway, met this latent but paramount necessity of the time. Its appearance at the critical moment when the stern valour of the North had dominated degenerate Europe—when the character of future civilization, then in embryo, trembled in the balance between martial ferocity and demoralizing asceticism—cannot be ascribed to that adaptation of human society to surrounding circumstances by which the Darwinists of sociology would account for the progress of mankind, as Darwinian physiologists have accounted for that of the animal world. The rude freemen of the North when, swarm after swarm, they conquered and possessed the fertile soil and softer climates of the South, recognized nothing so little as their need of softening and

refining influences. On the contrary, hardness, willingness both to inflict and to suffer cruelty would have seemed to them the one essential end of social organization and manners, as well as the chief aim and purpose of individual education. The fortune of a remote future never affected their imagination and could nowise influence their idea of the institutions suited to themselves. The introduction of chivalry, then, was not a natural development, but a direct contradiction of all their conscious needs and purposes, though it was of vital importance to the work they were unconsciously preparing—the civilization that was not to flower or bear fruit for some four or five hundred years. How then will Evolution, with its theory of immediate adaptation to immediate surroundings, account for the appearance and development of this social anomaly—so strange in itself, so uncongenial to the races among whom it arose, yet so dominant, so persistent, that it moulded their society, overruled the notions natural to their age, and tempered their barbarism into a civilization higher than the world had previously seen?—How can it be explained except on the theory that human history is distinctly controlled and guided to definite and very distinct ends by a wisdom higher than human? Had it not been for chivalry there could have been no such civilization as ours. The Materialist, the Evolutionist treats chivalry as a craze—a craze, however, which endured for several centuries among the most practical and powerful of nations. This craze has accomplished greater results than even the savage valour out of which it so strangely sprang, and which gave to it and

to the races influenced by it the mastery of the world.' Is it rational or possible to ascribe, as we must ascribe such results to what you consider mere folly, and yet believe that the folly and its results were alike accidental?"

"You forget," said Sterne, "that for some time it seemed doubtful whether Europe was to be Christian and chivalric or Mahometan and polygamic; and that in the earlier ages of chivalry the highest extant civilization was Oriental and anti-chivalrous."

"True; and how, setting aside the idea of Providential guidance, explain that coincidence which at once introduced chivalry among the less civilized of the contending races, and secured—through a series of separate and long dubious struggles ending at every *vital* point in the victory of the less civilized over the more civilized—the final development of the highest civilization of all? It was necessary to that crowning product of so many centuries, the Christendom of to-day, first that the Aryan nations should be rendered chivalrous; secondly, that they should conquer and crush the then higher but essentially and potentially poorer civilization of the Mahometan East and South. Neither of these results could have seemed at all likely to merely human wisdom, if we suppose the highest human intelligence looking upon the character and condition of Europe before the Crusades, and possessed of all the knowledge accumulated during the interval for the benefit of this boastful nineteenth century. Each event was in itself supremely improbable; the combination of the two improbabilities could alone achieve the highest destiny open to distant gene-



rations of mankind. Both the improbabilities were realized, and through their joint realization the best result that could have been worked out of the pre-existing materials has been accomplished."

"Ay," said Gerard, "and note that the conquest of the comparatively civilized intellectual Moors and Saracens by the comparatively barbaric Norman and Franks was really the victory *in the long run* of a higher civilization over a lower. The Aryan chivalry—inferior in all actual features of civilization to those Oriental races which then possessed the best culture and discipline of their age—were, nevertheless, by force of character and by the nature of their race-institutions, capable of developing and destined to develop a social order, a culture, a world-subduing world-organizing energy, even a warlike discipline, above all a practical morality—in fine a civilization—far higher than could ever have been evolved out of the Saracenic and Moorish empires, whose culture, art, and power were then the finest in the world, and had probably reached very nearly the highest point they were capable of attaining."

"Take, again," said Cleveland, "the Crusades themselves. We shall all agree that, regarded from a statesman's standpoint in the light of immediate secular expediency, nothing could have been more preposterously unwise, nothing more dangerous to the internal welfare of the nations that engaged in them. Indeed the statesmen of the time, in proportion to their intelligence and calmness of judgment, were cordially opposed to the scheme of Asiatic conquest which so powerfully possessed the imagination of ambitious Norman chiefs and dominated the feelings of the multitude. A

Godfrey de Bouillon, a St. Louis, furnish the highest and noblest type of the Crusader; Richard Cœur de Lion must have far surpassed the average. Men like our own Henry Plantagenet and Philip Augustus were opposed to a movement that drained the strength of their realms and added to the already dangerous ascendancy of the Church; Edward I., the greatest of English kings, did not engage in the Crusade till the power of the Crown was firmly established by the defeat of Simon de Montfort; and returned home, never to resume so distant an enterprise, as soon as he succeeded to the Throne with all its domestic responsibilities. Nothing, again, could be more inconsistent with the true spirit of that religion which inspired the fanatics who attempted to recover for Christendom the tomb of Christ, the shores of Galilee, the Temple and the Mount of the Crucifixion. The Crusades then were the insanity of an age; the passion alike of saints and soldiers, the impolicy of politic princes, the unchristian fury of Christians. Yet they are held by some most competent historians (certainly not biassed by sympathy with their motives) to have contributed most powerfully to the actual determination of the vital issues whereon depended the fortunes of the world. They united the Christian nations in a league far more solid and enduring than any other motive could have formed against that Mahometan Power whose discipline intelligence and enthusiasm threatened to conquer them one by one; which actually did conquer and long maintained itself in Spain; which down to the close of the 17th century, continued to menace Vienna and Hungary, and holds by the sword to this hour the last

provinces retained by the Roman Empire on either side of the Dardanelles and the Egæan after Western Europe had long passed into new and nobler hands. They also brought to bear on European ignorance many of the most valuable results of Oriental culture. But taking the former point alone, no one who fairly appreciates how closely, in spite of the Crusades, the struggle between Mahometanism and Christianity was long balanced in Spain and on the Danube, can fairly doubt that but for the Crusades Europe might well have been conquered in detail by Asia, and Christianity by Islam. Here again an extraordinary outbreak of human perversity and religious inconsistency was made a most important means, if not a *sine qua non*, of that turn in the fortunes of humanity which is perhaps the most momentous in history. The Crusades failed, moreover, of their direct object. Jerusalem, recovered for years, was lost for centuries not yet expired; Constantinople and its home provinces shared the fate of Asia. Nevertheless the apparent military failure was a substantial political victory. It broke the power that threatened Christendom, and in Christendom the unborn future whose possibilities of good or evil are but dawning on us, whose vitality strongly contrasts the rapid decay of Asiatic greatness and promise. It created a moral union among Christian nations which survived all their quarrels; which survived indeed the original enemy, assisted materially to protect the line of the Danube against the Turk, and still influenced European feeling, if not European policy, when, in his later years, Louis XIV. allied himself with the Sultan; and thereby scandalized the public opinion of Europe

more than by the devastation of the Palatinate, or the seizure of the Spanish crown. Have we not here, if anywhere, evidence of superhuman wisdom bringing the grandest practically valuable results out of the wildest of human errors and absurdities?"

"I do not know," replied Sterne, "that you have any right to infer, whenever good comes out of evil, that some overruling power must have turned the evil to good account. To me it seems that the Crusades produced just the effect which a cold-blooded reasoner, reckoning on the unbounded folly of men—say, for instance, a far-sighted, ambitious and unscrupulous Pope, loyal to the Church as other Princes to their dynasties—might have anticipated; and that the triumph of Europe over Asia in the final result of the age-long struggle, was but the natural consequence of that inherent superiority which you ascribe to the Aryan race."

"Note," returned Cleveland, "that at that time the Aryan race was *not* superior in anything save inherent individual manhood, and perhaps, though this I greatly doubt, in its institutions. There was certainly more of liberty, more scope for individual action, in feudal Europe than under Oriental despotisms; but the discipline, the culture, the union of Islam were so far superior in military value to the feudal order of Christendom that all probability seemed in favour of the former. Observe, too, that three conditions, all apparently most unlikely—the growth of chivalry, the check given to Mahometanism partly through the union, such as it was, of Christendom effected by the Crusades, and, lastly, the victory of comparative barbarism over com-

parative civilization—were essential to the actual and desirable result. Failing any one of these three improbabilities, the civilization of our own age, spread over half the world, could not have been attained. That each of three such conditions, two of them absolutely independent and the third by no means a necessary or even a likely consequence of the second, should have been fully accomplished by mere accidental coincidence, is a mathematical improbability so great as certainly to constitute strong ground for believing that the coincidence was *not* accidental. If not accidental, since it certainly was due to no human foresight or policy and to no natural discernible causes, to what are we to ascribe it save to superhuman control and direction of human events?"

"A similar idea of the predestined triumph of Aryan democracy," said Gerard, "was made on my mind by reading Professor Creasy's '*Fifteen Decisive Battles*,' or rather perhaps by the reflections which that work inspired. I look back on a series of unconnected critical events in human history occurring at the most distant periods and among the most diverse races; and I see that each of them has tended to, I might almost say each has been necessary to, the one great result; the supremacy of the highest race and the consequent prevalence of the highest civilization which, so far as we can see, mankind could by this time have attained under any possible arrangement of events. Had the Athenians failed at Marathon, there was then no Western Power (remembering the timid selfishness of the Spartan oligarchy) likely to have arrested the march of an Asiatic conqueror wielding the great force

of the Persian monarchy ; a force which would have been welded into firmer coherence by each fresh victory. Secondly, had Themistocles failed to detain the Peloponnesian squadrons at Salamis, had the Greeks been defeated there or at Plataea, the same result must probably have followed. If at the fourth critical moment Carthage had crushed the Syracusan power, conquered and assimilated Hellenic Sicily, before the power of Rome had grown into a strength adequate to the great Punic wars, Europe would in all likelihood have been Orientalized. The immediately higher commercial civilization of Carthage would have triumphed over the then less refined and less advanced but more vigorous martial civilization of Rome. Hate Rome as we may, and I hate her the more as I learn to understand her better, she possessed two essential qualifications for empire which Carthage lacked. She could assimilate and she could organize; she absorbed and Romanized Italy while Carthage could only dominate Libya ; she gave law and order to provinces which Carthage apparently could have used only to furnish mercenaries and merchandise. Could Carthage ever have imposed on Southern Europe and Asia Minor that 'Roman peace' which, despite its vices, its injustice, and its deliberate postponement of the well-being of provinces to the contentment of a city populace, was the condition of many past and present gains, perhaps of many more important results in the future? On a fifth occasion the victories of Alexander, Hellenizing Western Asia, prepared it to assimilate the civilization of Rome. The defeat of Hannibal—deeply as, in reading the history, we may regret his failure and hate his

conquerors—may be counted as the sixth of those critical conjunctures wherein the fate of the world has been decided by the event of battle, and decided always, again and again, in the same direction and to the same purport—for Aryan Europe against Semitic Asia. The Roman empire, and the facilities of communication it gave, the common law and languages it established throughout the then civilized world, are affirmed by nearly all the best and most thoughtful Church historians to have given Christianity such an opportunity, such freedom and facility for growth as it could hardly have enjoyed at any earlier moment. The simultaneous decay of all national religions, moreover, had left the field open to the new faith; left it without any rival possessing a hold on national pride, on public conviction, or on the cultivated intellect of the age. This is one of those coincidences on which, as I think justly, Cleveland lays so much stress. The Roman peace might have been treated as one of those accidents of adaptation which are explained by Evolutionists on the ground that till the favouring condition was attained all efforts in the new direction were crushed in the bud. But where we have *two* favouring and totally independent conditions concurring, and at the same moment see the germ to whose development they are necessary making its first appearance, we have a triple coincidence which cannot be ascribed to sheer accident without a gross disregard of the mathematical law of chances. Each decisive struggle again between Christendom and Islam, from the first check given to Moorish invasion by Charles Martel and by the Spanish mountaineers down to the siege of Vienna and the battle of Lepanto, marks a crisis in human

destiny—a moment when the fate of human civilization trembled in the balance; and at each vital instant the fortune of battle decided the event in favour of the remote but ultimate interests of mankind. Take, again, another issue in which, as we must all agree, mankind were deeply interested (though my idea of their true interests is diametrically opposed to Cleveland's); I mean the question of slavery. Is it possible to study the age-long history of that question without seeing how during the last four or six centuries influences and incidents of the most varied kind have tended to the destruction of one of the oldest and most tenacious of human institutions? There was no natural reason why the influence of the Church should have been thrown (as it was thrown) into the scale in favour of the thrall or serf; for there is nothing in the New Testament to discourage slavery, very much in the Old to support it; and that general spirit of Christianity with which slavery is affirmed to be incompatible had little weight either with the Court of Rome or with the clergy of her Communion. It was rather by an accident of her constitution, rendering the distinction between priest and layman so vital and paramount as to be hardly compatible with the maintenance of any human distinction that could conflict therewith,—rather by her determination to assert the right of every human being to become a priest and, as such, the superior of the highest layman—than by any intelligent or charitable purpose, that the Mediæval Church was insensibly led to wage a steady quiet almost silent, and therefore the more effective and successful, war against feudal slavery. The demand of feudal chiefs that their bondsmen should



not be ordained without their consent illustrates the character of the age, and the services which the Church's accidental adherence to the Christian idea of spiritual equality—an idea not so prominent in Christ's teaching as many of those which His followers promptly rejected or evaded—rendered to humanity. There could be no Fugitive Slave Law while Churches and Monasteries at every turn offered an inviolable sanctuary. The Church of Rome had abolished or almost abolished serfdom before the Reformation paralysed her power. Negro slavery, again, was apparently one of the most natural durable and important results of the discovery of America. The war which achieved the independence of our American Colonies threatened to perpetuate the curse by depriving the British Parliament and the Common Law, immemorially committed as both were to the traditions of freedom, of all power over those continental regions of British America to which slavery was most valuable, and where it was sure to spread;—leaving the control of the matter to those who were interested in maintaining and extending the evil. Yet I believe that this very defeat tended directly to Abolition. Had the English Abolitionists in 1833 been confronted, not merely by the influence and interests of the decaying sugar planters of a few West Indian Islands, but also by the whole weight of all the Gulf States, of Virginia, Kentucky, and the Carolinas, they could hardly have prevailed. It was a necessary and generally accepted condition of their success that the planters should be compensated for the loss of a property recognised for generations by the law. It was possible to compensate the sugar-planters of the Antilles: to

purchase the freedom of some two millions of negroes on the Continent would have been an effort too great even for British enthusiasm and an awakened national conscience. The evil continued and extended itself in the United States till a property worth some two thousand millions of dollars, invested in four millions of human beings, rendered emancipation by purchase impossible, while received doctrines of law and equity alike forbade any other method. Nothing but a civil war—so bitter, so prolonged, so threatening to the national existence and to the imperial pride of the North as to override all regard for private interests and all scruples of respect for property—could have cut this Gordian knot, and secured by the sword the freedom of slaves too numerous and too valuable to be purchased even by the richest of nations. The strength, the courage, the resolve, the pride of the South, her passionate attachment to her peculiar institution, all that up to 1860 seemed to rivet most firmly the chains of the slave, really tended to destroy slavery. Without these the South would never have seceded, or, having seceded, would not have fought so long and so desperately; and it was the duration and the desperate character of the struggle that involved the fall of slavery. To employ a physical illustration, the stubbornness of the resistance, the long delay interposed by obstacles almost equal to the forces that dashed against them, converted much of the military momentum into the heat of passion needed for such a work. At first, not only Congress and the President, but the great majority of the Northern people, disliked abolition only less than disunion, and would readily have given ample guaran-

tees against the one in order to avert the other. Only when the passions of war had fused all political aims, all constitutional principles, in one white heat of hatred to the South and everything Southern, could the palpable illegality of Executive emancipation have found approval and support from the people and the army. And *then* with the fall of slavery in the Southern States the doom of the institution was sealed; Brazil has practically abandoned, and Cuba cannot for another generation sustain it."

"True," said Cleveland. "Though my sympathies, my sense of right and justice, went from first to last with the Confederate States—though, moreover, I believe that when the Aryan and African races are once brought together in large numbers and in close contact slavery in some form is the best and only natural relation in which they can co-exist—though again I founded on such military experience as historians up to that time had recorded a theoretical belief that a country like the South could never be conquered while its population were willing to fight—my hopes were always clouded by my recollection that the whole course of history had run against slavery, and against the Powers by which slavery was upheld. It does not follow that I had for a moment the slightest doubt of the goodness of our cause; any more than in reading history one doubts that Hannibal was not only the noblest soldier and the truest patriot of his age, but that—so far as in a struggle between nations of that epoch, when might made right, such terms as right and wrong are applicable—the cause of Carthage in the second Punic war was altogether just, and the policy

of Rome sheer lawless aggression. But I did feel from first to last an instinctive fear, wholly independent of the particular conditions, that slavery would probably perish in the war; though in perishing it might reduce the fairest portions of the American Continent to the barbarism into which Jamaica is lapsing. I felt this as some true Catholic, in studying the history of his Church since the Reformation—while firmly believing in her creed and in her claim to represent Divine truth and right on earth—might yet feel that the hand of Providence has for centuries been against her. I thought, I repeat, that slavery would perish and I felt a deep misgiving that, as proved to be the fact, it would perish under the ruins of the Confederacy; and drag with it in its fall the most heroic army that ever fought, the noblest nation that ever suffered, for honour independence and public law. In one word, I believed, in the only sense those words can practically bear among reflecting men, that we were fighting against God."

"I hardly understand," said Gerard, "how, with such a feeling, you could consent to fight at all."

"Do you forget, then," rejoined Cleveland, "how often the hand of Providence has been manifestly against the better cause? Do you forget the Pagan saying that reconciles so many readers of history to the fall of the noblest States and the defeat of the truest heroes, '*Victrix causa Deis placuit, sed victa Catoni*;' or the cynical paradox of the French Empire that 'Heaven is on the side of the bigger battalions'? Do you forget, again, that in the American struggle everything that was personally great and noble was to

be found almost exclusively on the Southern side? The North produced no gentleman and Cavalier worthy to be named in the same day with him who led so long the splendid chivalry of Virginia and the Carolinas, and before whom, on every occasion, the Northern cavalry (often the Northern infantry) were scattered like chaff before the wind. The Unionists had no twenty statesmen whose combined moral and intellectual powers would have reached the level of President Davis—indeed, the comparative quality of the two nations could hardly be better illustrated than by contrasting the Mississippian soldier and gentleman chosen to rule the ‘rebels’ with the ‘rail-splitter’ representative of the ‘legitimate’ democracy, whose term, had he died in his bed four or five years later, would have been remembered only as marking the nadir of American political decline; the culmination of the vulgarity moral as well as formal, of the unworthiness and ignobleness that had so long dishonoured more and more deeply the chair of Washington. Lincoln’s uncleanness of language and thought would hardly have been tolerated in a Southern ‘bar.’ Or, again, take the favourites of the North—the best-known names in the camp and Cabinet—Sheridan and Hunter, whose ravages recall the devastation of the Palatinate, political rowdies like Banks and Butler, braggarts like Pope and Hooker, or even professional soldiers like Meade, Sigel, Sherman; these are the ‘household words’ of the North, and any one Southern chief of the second rank—Ewell, Early, Fitzhugh Lee, Hardee, Polk, Hampton, Gilmer, Mahone, Gordon—alone outweighs them all. Needless to remind you

that among the 'twenty millions—mostly fools' was no man whom even party spirit dared liken to the stern simple Virginian professor, the Cavalier-Puritan, whose brigade of recruits stood 'like a stone wall' under the convergent fire of artillery and rifles that was closing round them at Manassas: no A. P. Hill, second only to Jackson among the lieutenants of Lee; no strategist comparable to him whose death by simple self-neglect marred the victory of Corinth, or his namesake, who baffled so long the three-fold force of Sherman in the Georgian campaign. Rivers, railways, and brute numbers only enabled the Federal power not to conquer but to exhaust on fifty battle-fields, nearly all disastrous and disgraceful to the Union, 'the flower of that incomparable Southern infantry' whose superiority is acknowledged in these very words by one of the bitterest of Northern historians. Even did not the stain of a cruel, causeless, cowardly assassination rest upon his name, Washington himself could not sustain as soldier, statesman, or citizen a comparison with the last and greatest of the long list of Virginian heroes. Not all the military exploits of all former American history thrown into one can count with the defence of thirty miles of slender earthworks, by a force never from the first numbering more than 45,000, and at last dwindling to 28,000, against armies counting as potentially or actually available a quarter of a million. 'Since the last Athenian covered his face with his mantle and mutely died,' the world has seen no such example of absolute, unconscious simplicity, utter self-devotion, patriotism yet more signally exhibited in humiliating disaster than in a brilliant career of victory, as that

shown by General Lee; the first military chief of the age, yet greater in the college than even in the camp; the noblest member of a splendid chivalry, yet most noble amid the ruins of his cause, his country, and his fortunes; the one true knight *sans tache, sans peur, et sans reproche*, the living embodiment of all that is grandest in the ideals of the Past as of all that is simplest in the promised republican manhood of the Future: ideal soldier, pattern Christian, 'selfless man and stainless gentleman.' Little as man can know of the ways of Providence, what indication, however clear, of the probable purposes of Heaven could for a moment countervail to my conscience or to yours the warranty given for the righteousness of a cause by the names of Stuart, Stonewall Jackson, and Robert Edmund Lee?"

"What you feel, Cleveland," said I, "with regard to the South, I have felt all my life with regard to that general principle of which the South was but the noblest and last representative.

'This by no narrow bounds was circumscribed,'

'It was the cause of chivalry at large.'

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To my mind chivalry represents whatever is hopeful, whatever is worth fighting for in human character and possibilities. I believe in, I care for, the utmost development of the highest intellectual and moral forms of manhood infinitely more than I believe in or desire to help forward the gradual elevation to such low standard as they may possibly reach of mankind at large. And if the latter be indeed a task imposed on humanity, it will best be achieved unconsciously in striving after the former. The philanthropist who thinks much and

therefore dwells eagerly on the progress achieved by the Many, does the work of his worst enemy, the demagogue. He fosters that arrogance and envy which are the natural vices of democracy, and that delirious drunken dream of 'equality' proximate and probable which keeps the multitude constantly in chase of a phantom, and of a phantom which draws them ever, morally and politically, further down the broad and easy way that leadeth to destruction. Therefore all my life long I have been a Conservative: therefore I was from December 1860 until now, and shall be to my latest day, a devoted partisan of the Starry Cross. The fall of Richmond took from my profession and my politics all the interest they ever had—beyond the vulgar need of making money and a stern sad sense of personal duty towards a cause of whose success I never for a moment dreamed. But even before that last struggle of fading chivalry began, I felt the almost despairing sentiment you describe not only in regard to the South, but in regard to the ultimate doom of every form of the Conservative or Chivalric idea: It was not by the votes that swamped us here, it was not by the overwhelming numbers that crushed our cause beyond the Atlantic, that I was dismayed—

——— 'Non me tua fervida terrent  
Dicta, ferox; di me terrent et Jupiter hostis.'

I feel no more hope of ultimate victory now, when a Conservative Ministry is supported by what Gerard calls a Tory majority in both Houses, than I felt when we were outnumbered in every Parliament by three to



two; than I felt when—to save some eight thousand sabres and bayonets, the poor relics of the finest soldiery in the world—the last representative of Christian chivalry, foregoing for duty's sake the hope of a soldier's death, bowed to the manifest decree of the God of Battles, and endured to surrender his army and survive his country.”

## CHAPTER XIX.

*LIFE WITHOUT GOD.*

THE whole of the party already introduced to the reader dined with Cleveland, and were joined by several ladies, and by one man of some scientific distinction representing the sentimental or poetic side of Nihilism almost as distinctly as Sterne represented its harder and more practical aspect. He would probably have preferred to call himself a Pantheist rather than an Atheist. As he came alone from the little village inn where he was staying, and had not far to walk home, he remained with us during the whole of our smoking-room conversation, or *tabacs-parlament*. I shall call him Merton. Some incident turned the current of talk upon the relation of religion to morality, a topic upon which Vere and Cleveland naturally embraced views diametrically opposed to those of Sterne and the new-comer.

"You should remember," Vere said, in the course of the discussion, "that your morality and that of nearly all Materialists, especially English Materialists, is in essence and origin Christian. You may try hereafter to found an ethical system upon a new basis wholly independent of that supplied by the education of individuals or of communities in Christian or at least in religious doctrines; but as a matter of fact both the

principles and the details of your actual code are taken in your own despite from Christianity, and would very commonly be quite other than they are had they really been worked out, as you have tried to work them out, by logical deduction from secular premises. The virtue of chastity, for instance, had not its origin and finds little support in a purely natural morality; and the obligations of marriage are so distinctly Christian, or religious, that they could hardly sustain themselves for even two generations after Christianity had lost its hold upon the mind of society."

"I can hardly admit that," said Sterne. "Remember, for example, that the marriage-laws of ancient Rome were scarcely less strict than our own, and that, under the Republic, the purity of Roman houses seems to have been beyond suspicion."

"Ay," interjected Cleveland. "That purity was an essential part of the patriarchal idea, and that idea was the basis of Roman life and law. Besides, morality based on the subjection of the individual to the State is no more 'natural' and far more artificial than that based on a supposed revelation."

"No doubt," continued Sterne, "Roman domestic life had been thoroughly corrupted before the founder of the Imperial dynasty declared that 'Cæsar's wife must not be suspected.' But the story of Cornelia, however unfounded in fact, indicates what were the ideas and what the standard of domestic life and duty familiar to Roman thought. Where a matron could speak of her sons as the choicest of jewels, where tradition paid the highest reverence to a wife who had refused to survive her honour, marriage and the home

must have been held in reverence as great as is paid to them now in England and in Germany."

"Of course they were," Cleveland again interposed. "Ancient religion was national; and every primary law, usage, and tradition was part and parcel of the national religion."

"And, again," pursued Sterne, "we know that Roman law placed the wife as absolutely as the children under the *patria potestas*, with its right of life and death; yet, while we have traditions which at least prove that Roman feeling recognised the father's moral right to exert this authority in its extremest form over his son, we have not a single tradition of domestic capital punishment inflicted on a woman; a fact which—bearing in mind the sternness of Roman temper; the severity shown to a vestal convicted of unchastity, the rarity of divorce, coupled with the extreme jealousy of domestic honour—suffices to prove how faithful as a rule Roman wives must have been, and how far their fidelity must have been appreciated and rewarded."

"Of course," returned Vere, "I did not intend to imply that marriage and matronly chastity are not of older origin than Christianity, or any other existing form of religion. As matter of fact, however, I believe that no especial sanctity has been attached to them, save when bound up with the hereditary law which was a heathen's religion; as in a very few exceptional cases, whereof that of Rome is the most remarkable. We must not forget that Roman law and Roman religion were in the old days one and the same, and probably the sanctity attached to marriage grew out of the *patria potestas* rather than gave rise to it. I say, however,

that maiden and married chastity are not of *natural* obligation, and could never retain their peculiar binding force when once mankind were emancipated from *all* supernatural sanctions, and from all laws resting originally on a supernatural basis; whether Pagan, Moslem, or Christian."

"Surely," interposed Merton, "the social bond must retain its natural and obvious validity even were no single man left alive who could remember the days when men believed in revelation, in a Creator, or in a future state of moral requital? And if, as probably most of us believe, marriage be essential to the permanent wellbeing and order of society, it would be enforced by precisely the same sanctions that would put down any other form of anti-social vice."

"I think not," said Gerard. "The relation of the sexes, though matter of public interest, is yet primarily and essentially matter of private concern and private contract. And no social sanction would be allowed, under the rule of pure Materialistic philosophy, to override the deeper, incomparably clearer, more definite and naturally paramount interest of the individual in such a matter, or the right of two coequal citizens to cohabit or to separate as they please, provision being once made for the children."

"I mentioned this, however," continued Vere, "only as one among many examples of the actual laws which Materialistic ethics really derive from religion. Put religion aside, and I see no right and no just reason in virtue of which society can claim to interfere, whether by law or by opinion, with any relation between men and women—even with pure and simple prostitution."

"Simply this right and reason," said Merton, "that all promiscuous relations are injurious to the community at large, and that the welfare of the community at large—the greatest happiness of the greatest number, if you will—must override in Positivist ethics all merely personal considerations, wishes, and feelings."

"Whatever," answered Cleveland, "may be the conceivable forms of a future morality from which religion is to be excluded, one thing, I think, is quite certain: that what you call Positivism will have nothing to do with it. Positivism attempts to borrow the authority of religion while dispensing with all its sanctions; and this is a simple impossibility. Religion gives us a moral code, emanating from an infallible irresistible authority, and enforced by terrible penalties here or hereafter. Such an ethical law may well command and even coerce the obedience of mankind. But, in these days at least, when individual liberty is held so sacred and when its claims are so high and paramount, it is I fear unreasonable to imagine and impossible to expect that men will ever consent in practice to accept a code equally strict, emanating from no higher authority than that of individual teachers and sanctioned only by legal and terrestrial penalties; against which the conscience will certainly revolt, as imposed by mere tyranny and involving an unwarrantable interference with personal freedom."

"The personal freedom of the one man," returned Merton, "cannot possibly be allowed to menace the welfare of the community, and the community will always be strong enough to enforce its obvious rights. Of course the mere *ipse dixit* of an individual teacher,

or even of a school, however wise, could not give bind-force to a system whether of law or of morals; but when once such a system has been formally and deliberately sanctioned by society at large, it will have all the authority that law can give it; and after all it is the authority of law and of opinion—which under a Positivist or even under a Democratic Government would gradually be more or less fused into one—that now binds the conscience and controls the conduct of men; if not always efficiently yet with an effect far greater in practice than that of their religious convictions.”

“In the first place,” said Cleveland, “you cannot induce a society thoroughly penetrated by the idea of personal freedom to accept a system by which personal freedom would be almost abolished. It is in this, even more than in the economic dangers and difficulties easily discerned by philosophers and students, that the practical impossibility of Communism lies. If Communism could be made to work without constant and intolerable interference with the privacy and the liberty of individuals, I think the probability that democratic envy of wealth would insist on trying it very strong indeed. One chief barrier against it is that, as soon as you begin to work out in detail a practical scheme of Communistic life, you are compelled to impose on each member of the community an inquisitorial tyranny, an intolerable, minute, incessant control, which an Asiatic caste society might bear; but which no promise, however gratifying to greed, envy, and malice, would render endurable to the temper of the European races, and especially of the Anglo-Saxon family. In your scheme

of irreligious or æsthetic morality, whatever it is to be, you must leave the personal conduct of individuals certainly not less free from social control than now—wherever it does not directly and visibly touch the immediate interest or actual safety of society. You will never be allowed to proscribe by law actions not palpably and primarily concerning the community; and opinion will have the less force that it will be no longer based upon some perhaps indefinite but traditionally superhuman sanction, but must rely on the personal ideas of a multitude of individuals; individuals no one of whom will be recognised by the person whose action is canvassed as entitled by superior wisdom, rank, or character to pass judgment upon him, and whose mere number does not confer either wisdom or moral weight.”

“Before we go into the question of future moral laws or moral sanctions,” returned Sterne, “I should like to ask how much influence religion really exercises, whether directly or indirectly, over the daily life and practical conduct of our own generation?”

“I think,” said Vere, “that that influence is very great, much greater than even conservative moralists generally recognize. Of course we have to consider its indirect as well as its direct power. But even directly, I believe that it has a very great influence. Religion gives even to positive law much of its actual authority. If, for example, the laws against theft rested simply on that force which must in the last resort assert them against thieves, the whole proletariat would stand morally in that attitude in which professional thieves now stand; regarding the law as framed by the influence if not by the sole power of property holders for



their own benefit, and as something indifferent or hostile to the poor, which they are perfectly entitled if they can to evade or violate. The thief by profession does not regard legal punishment as in any sense disgraceful; and but for the indirect authority of religion, operating on him through its strong influence on social opinion, he would not, I believe, consider himself as a degraded scoundrel who deserves all he gets when found out, but would look on the law and on society in the spirit of a Highland chieftain of the Middle Ages, who considered himself as engaged in legitimate warfare against the civilized Lowlands; a war in which no quarter was given, but of which plunder was a legitimate incident and object, and in which detection and capture were mere defeat, involving no other disgrace than might attach to want of strength or skill. In our days the thief, and still more the multitude of lawless characters, is cowed to a great extent by the consciousness that every man's hand is against them—that the law would in case of need be backed by the entire physical force of the community—but yet more by the sense of social contempt and hatred. The conviction of rightful authority, of a cause unquestionably just, which religious sanctions have given to the honest part of society, is essential to that cohesion and decision which constitute its peculiar strength; as on the other hand a certain consciousness of guilt and of fighting against fate “demoralizes” the lawless, rendering them incapable of combination and organization even for their common object of plunder. But for this difference we should require a police superior, if not in numbers yet, by virtue of numbers combined with discipline and organi-

zation, in effective strength to the whole of the criminal classes. Now if you could do away with the traditional authority of the Eighth Commandment, you would have at least the whole of the proletariat naturally—and we could hardly say wrongly—approximating to the moral attitude of the thief and regarding plunder (since *they* have no property to be stolen) not as disgraceful in the last degree, but simply as a question of policy and prudence. Whether each man should or should not rob his wealthier neighbour would be as mere a question of personal convenience and interest as with a certain school of philosophers, happily very limited in number, is now the question whether the proletariat as a body, in right of numbers and votes, should or should not plunder particular classes—as they have pillaged the Irish Churchmen, robbed Irish landlords, and threatened to rob landlords or capitalists in general. Grant that a considerable majority even of those who have no property of their own might conclude that on the whole it was best to sustain and to obey the law as it now stands; still disobedience would be branded with no such infamy as the conscience of a people educated in Christian ethics has for ages attached to theft or embezzlement; you would have no instinctive feeling of contempt and hatred towards the thief on the part of the community as a whole. You would lose all the moral forces which now operate to restrain thieving, and would depend simply on the physical power and practical fear you could bring to bear. What physical force could in such a state of public feeling protect property? I doubt very much whether any physical force could protect even life, and prevent

personal outrage, if the law were backed by no moral instinct; if the criminal regarded himself and were regarded by others not as a violator of principles sanctioned by the Deity but simply as a breaker of social rules; in a word, as we now regard so-called political offenders, or as demagogues and simpletons regard poachers."

"But," replied Merton, "no one proposes to abolish morality. It is simply a question of the *kind* of moral code that reason could justify, and of the sanctions by which that code could be enforced. Let me recall you, therefore, to the first point, to that previous question just put—what is the actual value and effect of those religious sanctions whose abolition you think would destroy morality altogether?"

"The purport of my argument," rejoined Vere, "was to insist strongly at the outset upon the enormous value of the religious sanction in strengthening and giving authority and efficacy to human law. But you may be right in charging me with a divergence from the point, since probably we should begin by considering the direct and immediate influence of religion itself on the personal conscience. I say, then, that I rate this influence very highly indeed. Remember that all our notions of right and wrong, all our distinctions between that which is and that which is not permissible, are as yet derived directly and immediately from religion. We are educated from the cradle to think certain acts so infamous as to be almost impossible, and very many others sinful in the last degree; so that only very strong temptation induces us—even if we have ceased intellectually and logically to believe what we were

taught—to commit them. The very idea of duty, as it at present exists, is religious. If we owe obedience to parents or to the law, it is because God has given His sanction to certain human authorities. If we regard the free indulgence of the senses—apart from excesses dangerous to health—as wicked, or even as discreditable, we do so because we have received impressions on that subject through the whole of our earlier and more impressible years from an education resting on no other foundation than that supplied by religion. Set religion apart, and what foundation can you find in reason for that maiden modesty and matronly purity which give their principal charm to women; but for which few men would venture on the close partnership of marriage, without which half the ties of home would lose their sweetness and their power? Set aside religion, and what sanction really binding on the conscience can you find for filial respect and duty? Set aside religion, and what beyond mere personal affection binds the parent to toil for the children, the husband to respect and cherish the wife, the wife to show deference and compliance to the husband? Set aside, again, religion itself and those traditions which, if not strictly religious, are certainly so illogical as addressed to mere interest, however enlightened, that they must perish under a rule of pure reason—and why should any man risk life or limb for the safety and honour of his country?”

“Still,” interrupted Sterne, “you hardly keep to the point. You say that without religion there would be no logical reason for the performance of certain duties necessary, as you at all events think, to the cohesion

of society even in its simplest elements. When we come to reconstruct morality it will be our place to answer all this. What we wish to hear from you, in the first instance, is, what actual power religion exercises over the conduct of life ? ”

“ I have said,” replied Vere patiently, “ that in my opinion all the duties now recognized or performed are recognized on grounds and enforced by sanctions distinctly religious. I have said that our moral ideas and conduct are governed by the impressions education has made, and which are never effaced from our minds; and that moral education does as a matter of fact rest upon religion. Taking this for granted, you must see that at present the whole edifice of extant European morality is founded upon Christianity; and even if you could replace that foundation by another, the religion with which you propose to dispense is, as things actually stand, the basis of ethics. But putting aside the general influence of education and tradition, let us ask why men abstain from one class of actions and perform another, where they are not under fear of legal penalties? We know as matter of fact that the idea of legal punishment affects very little the daily life of any but the criminal or lawless classes. What then is it that constrains the rest of us to the duties and sacrifices of this work-day world? Those duties are hard, those sacrifices are considerable, though habit renders them matters of course scarcely perceptible to ourselves; though their fulfilment is with most of us probably a sort of ‘ reflex action ’ of the conscience. Why do men marry and bind themselves for life to adhere to one woman, and on the whole, if in many cases with occasional lapses, faithfully fulfil the

obligation? Some no doubt marry because, in the first place, they cannot obtain the society of the one particular woman they most desire on easier terms. But, after all, is it not probable that most men would on grave reflection and by deliberate choice rather give up that one woman than pay the irrevocable price they do pay, if habits of thought dependent on religion had not introduced into their most egotistical calculations the Christian idea that there can be no lasting safe settlement but in marriage? Why are so many of our youth what is called 'steady,' abstaining from certain amusements and enjoyments regarded as discreditable? You may say, because they fear the opinion of those around them, on whom their fortunes and their comfort depend. I doubt this explanation because, in a somewhat varied experience, I have found the most independent minds as a rule the most free from low sensual vices. I believe that on the whole a far smaller proportion of vicious careers are found among that class of men whose pride or whose thoughtfulness renders them very indifferent to and contemptuous of public opinion or social criticism, than among that great majority who are more or less afraid of and governed by the customs and opinion of those among whom they live. I doubt the effect of social censure, again, because as matter of fact young men are chiefly sensitive to the opinion of their own associates and equals; and that opinion does not constrain them to virtue though I admit that it does not on the whole encourage flagrant vice. I believe that the true explanation is to be found in actual genuine conscientiousness; a conscientiousness which operates differently upon the thoughtful minority and upon the thoughtless majority,

but operates on all. The average young man abstains from open habitual vice, because he has been brought up to think it wrong and does not wish to be at war with his conscience. The number of those whose religion is more conscious—who actually fear to offend the Almighty and incur the penalties denounced against sin, if not by the Gospel itself yet by the creed in which they have been educated—is perhaps larger than is commonly supposed. Even the thoughtful men who have on conviction rejected merely traditional ethics and Christian sanctions but still believe in a God, (whether they do or do not believe in a future life) have a very strong reluctance to alienate themselves from Him. Much of what the world calls vice and Christians sin seems to them rather *malum prohibitum* than *malum in se*. But in those years when the passions are strongest and temptation most frequent, they have seldom clearly convinced themselves that these things are *certainly* innocent; and not feeling sure of their innocence, they prefer not to do what may, for aught they know, be displeasing to Heaven; what at any rate would render them uncomfortable in their hearts and uneasy as to the approval of Providence. Uncertainty does not necessarily destroy the authority of conscience or the influence on conduct of principles learnt in youth. Only the conviction that they are false can make earnest men quite content to disobey them. Women, again, are very largely influenced by religion, though perhaps yet more strongly by the opinion of others; Cleveland would say, by the morals in fashion. But moral fashions derive more than half their power from the belief of those who submit to them that what

the world thinks wrong is also likely to offend Heaven. So, the opinion and instincts of women exercise over men an influence naturally strong, and enhanced by the fact that female opinion on moral questions appeals to a more than human authority. I affirm, then, that in an infinite variety of ways motives, which when examined are in their essence or in their origin religious, do control the conduct of all who profess any religion whatsoever; do constrain them to a multitude of little daily sacrifices, do keep them up to the constant performance of a multitude of duties, where in the absence of such motives they would very soon take their own way; and these duties and sacrifices are precisely those on which the practical working of society, the comfort of homes, the peace and decency of life depend. I affirm also that the direct motives, which I will call not merely religious but theological, have a much wider sphere of influence, a much deeper constraining force than is commonly supposed. A great number of women at least are consciously influenced at critical moments by actual theological fear and hope, and in their daily life by habits to which this fear and hope have given strength and sanction. The same theological motives operate to frighten a great many men, not indeed from minor sins, but, in the first place, from great and grave offences, and in the next, from a life of deliberate and defiant vice; so that practically the majority of professing Christians, of both sexes, are really coerced into habits of duty and restrained from the worst forms of occasional wickedness by theological influences. Again, I repeat that some men who do not think much of Heaven or Hell are directly influenced and controlled



by reverence for their Creator and fear of alienating themselves from Him—of feeling that He is passing more and more beyond the reach of their thought, trust, and prayer. And finally, I recur to my primary argument, that our standard of right and wrong is fixed by education; and that that education, acting not merely on one generation but through its effect on a score of preceding generations, really rests on a basis entirely religious and mainly theological. I believe, then, that words could hardly exaggerate the practical influence of religion upon life and conduct, even though the operation of religious motives is not at first sight obvious to outsiders; partly because religious motives are the last which even those whom they govern choose to assign, and partly because their force and effect, acting as they do chiefly through the habits and ideas they form, are very imperfectly appreciated by those whose career and daily practice they most affect; scarcely appreciated even in those moral crises in which man is more clearly and directly conscious of the influences that really control and decide his action."

"I fancy," said Merton, "that like most Christians, and especially like nearly all clergymen, you attribute to Christianity much that really belongs to chivalry, or, in a wider sense, to traditional class morality. Some twenty years ago, I, then an undergraduate in London, attended a lecture delivered by Sterne at a Secularist meeting-hall. I remember nothing of it, and at the time nothing much impressed me, save a single sentence which I have never forgotten:—'the word of a gentleman is a far surer pledge than the oath of a Christian.' After the lecture, a member of the audience, probably

a local preacher, admitted the truth of the saying, but explained it on the ground that 'the gentlemen of England were not Christians.' He certainly misunderstood Sterne's meaning, as he misstated the fact. At that time nine gentlemen in ten would have resented the allegation that they were not Christians; and Sterne's meaning of course was that, taking for granted the character of gentleman on the one hand and of Christian on the other, no practical man of the world would hesitate to prefer, whether in business or in personal relations, the simple word of the former as the more trustworthy pledge of the two. Is not the same thing true now, when, at least among the educated classes, the profession of Christianity has become much more of a party badge and much less a matter of course? Is it not true that most men, however sincere Christians, claiming the rank and having received the education of gentlemen, would feel their formal word of honour the most binding obligation they could give? I at least am sure that if I wished to impose upon a friend or acquaintance a peculiarly strict bond and one very unlikely to be broken through carelessness or temptation, I should not ask or wish for any oath, however awful its solemnity, but simply say—'You promise this on your honour as a gentleman!' Is it not true that in our daily lives we are much more frequently conscious of the restraint imposed by the impossibility of doing that which is unworthy of or unbecoming a gentleman than by any other obligation of duty or religion?"

"Certainly," replied Cleveland; "though I must make two remarks in qualification of my assent. The

class of duties to which we are constrained as gentlemen, and the nature of the constraint, are of a kind much more likely to be consciously recognized—exert a force much more directly felt as a check or control upon our inclinations—than those to which we are bound by the habit of thought formed by education or the convictions we have insensibly received through a long Christian ancestry. Again, the exclusive and special character of a pledge which we so rarely give enforces the obligation upon our memory as well as on our sense of honour; and our pride is inseparably entwined with a phrase which appeals to a class sentiment, to an exceptional position, and to the opinion of our equals. The special obligations or sanctions limited to the Few are almost always those which impress themselves most strongly upon the feelings to which they do appeal.”

“Precisely,” returned Merton. “And I wish for these reasons to insist on the importance of traditional ethics as a factor in that code of conscience which Vere derives solely from Christianity. Commercial morality, for example, is in this country remarkably lax. I should be afraid to rely on an ordinary man of business for anything beyond the fulfilment of promises enforceable by law, or whose breach would destroy his professional credit. But there are not only certain firms but certain classes who are notorious for a higher standard of conduct incompatible even with the recognized advantages commonly taken in business; who are known to all their acquaintance as men who would not sell shares or stocks of whose worthlessness they had received private information, or about which they

had special knowledge, to an unsuspecting customer; who would never dream of furnishing goods not fully equal to sample, and so forth. Now, I find that in nearly all these cases the special honesty, or more properly honour, is a family or caste tradition. There is a sect so limited in extent, numbers, and position—a sect which has few votaries save in the middle class—whose mere name, to those who know them well, is in some of the great commercial communities of the north, almost a sufficient guarantee for this kind of special loyalty. Upon examination, I find the reason to be simply this:—that a majority of its influential members belong to half-a-score extensive family connections, who have shaken off all the bigotry of the Puritanism from which their creed descends, but being for generations engaged in commerce have retained a Puritan ideal of commercial morality. They certainly are not a commercial aristocracy; and their peculiar strictness of morality, coupled with laxity of theological doctrine, extends not only to business but to domestic life. Excepting a few black sheep among the youngest of the flock, it may be said that ‘all their men are true, and all their women are chaste.’ Clearly their religion has nothing to do with their conduct, as distinguished from that of others. It is not because they hold exceptional views as to the Atonement and the Incarnation, but because they have inherited family traditions on certain points, that they may be trusted on those points as few others in the same rank can be trusted. As to chivalry, it can at best only influence a small minority. The moment they ceased to be a small and superior class, gentlemen would cease to pride themselves upon a

special code of honour. But the kind of traditional morality whereof I speak admits of so many varieties, so many differing sources, that it might extend in one form or another over half the community; and I incline to think that it has often more to do with those cases wherein Vere discovers a distinct and direct religious influence on conduct than has religion itself."

"I am tolerably familiar," answered Cleveland, "with many of the traditional codes to which you refer; and, save perhaps that of chivalry, I think that none of them justify any serious deduction from the importance which Vere attaches to religious influences. He is clearly right, in the first place, in affirming that our existing code is derived directly from Christianity: that our vital definitions of right and wrong have their origin almost exclusively in the scriptural teaching or ecclesiastical training of generations. He is right I think, to a great extent, in saying that the sanctions by which that code is enforced, even where they are not what he distinguishes as theological, are nevertheless religious. He has reminded us how many, how various, how obscure are the methods by which religion enforces upon us those daily obligations which, because they form part of an habitual system adopted in practice by all or nearly all those whose opinion can influence us, we fulfil without asking why or whether we should do so; which are in fact habits impressed on the conscience, or moral instincts of race or class. I will grant that apart from religion you might be able to maintain a legal code not much more lax than the present; that an educated society, for instance, might learn to look upon theft as so fatal to social welfare that thieves and

swindlers must be regarded and treated as infamous. But when democracy has swept away the traditions of chivalry, and materialism has gradually destroyed the influence of Christian principles, I fail to see any basis for a code of personal or domestic morals not enforceable or enforced by legal penalties. And we know that the peace of society, the happiness of life, the prosperity of the nation, depend far more on private morals than on public law, let that law be as severe and as searching as you please."

"It seems to me," said Merton, "that you yourself have, in a very few words, furnished an answer to your own objection, and a foundation for a code purely moral; outside and beyond the law. You allow that a society educated to discern the consequences, at present only perceptible to cultivated men, of antisocial crimes, could render those crimes infamous; that is, could affix to them all the disgrace which now attaches to them in the minds of men not greatly influenced by religion. If so, society could in the same way repress all antisocial vices, all habits of life not conducive to the common welfare."

"No," said Cleveland. "Men of sense and justice will recognise that society has some rights which it may justly enforce not merely by legal penalties but through that common and vehement condemnation passed by public opinion which inflicts what we call infamy. But the greater part of a man's personal life lies beyond the scope of these recognized social rights; and in regard thereto no man of independent character, no man endowed with pride and strength of mind, will be inclined to pay the least respect to the opinion of

the community. Already the contempt of educated men for the judgment and the censures of the vulgar is strongly marked; already there is a divergence amounting almost to a divorce between the ideas of the populace and those of men who have thought out their moral code for themselves. Striking out from the practical working of personal and domestic ethics those religious rules and sanctions which operate powerfully, though indirectly and unconsciously, on the thought of those whose intellectual judgment rejects religion, there will remain nothing common between the many vulgar (whatever their social rank or education) and the independent Few. Every man who prides himself on superiority to vulgar prejudice, and on independence of popular caprice, will then be inclined to reject hastily and contemptuously the received morality, simply because it is received. Moreover there will gradually become visible a deeper, more pervading rottenness or weakness in Atheistic ethics, and one which may extend far beyond the small circle of really independent minds against which perhaps society might for some time wage a successful war. As the Irishman said of posterity, so will men of courage, energy, and spirit say of society:—‘What has my country, what has mankind done for me, what obligation do I owe to them, that I should sacrifice any pleasure of my own for their ultimate interests? What right has society to tell me that I shall cohabit with one woman only, and choose my partner for life?’ I do not say that this view is just, especially on the point I have chosen as an example; but I do say that when, on the one hand, public opinion on moral questions has lost the con-

fidence it now derives from religion and especially from revealed religion—when, on the other hand, the individual recognizes in social claims nothing higher than the selfishness of a majority set against his own selfishness—there will be a constant and formidable increase in the number of those who will live as they please, defy opinion, and evade the law. In short, conscience will disappear, with all its influences, secret and visible, from the lives of thousands. Where it survives it will be among self-reliant and self-respecting men, so exclusively individual, so completely divorced from such conscience as inheres in a public opinion, that it will give no sort of social security, no sort of sanction to the social code of which Positivists dream, and in which Secularists seem to believe. Sterne may remember that this was one of the difficulties which Secularism failed to solve. His chief was asked more than once to furnish an answer to the question:—‘Grant that there is such a thing as duty; why should I do my duty if I have no punishment to fear here or hereafter; especially, if moreover, there be no authority higher than my own to tell me what duty is?’ No real answer was ever given. The most that could be extorted was somewhat to this effect:—‘Do you wish to live the life of a swine in mere personal and sensual pleasure? What can life be worth if it be not spent in the performance of loyal service to others?’ That answer came naturally from a man who had been enlisted—while still influenced by all the eager enthusiasm of youth and all the golden dreams of ignorance—in a great public cause, right or wrong. But it is not an answer that could ever convince a man disposed



to put the question in earnest. Even now but a very small minority of educated men are Democrats by conviction and enthusiasm; and none but Democrats can consistently defer on moral issues to a community the majority of whose individual members they naturally despise. The minds likely to exercise great influence over others are just those which will most thoroughly disdain to accept the rule of their lives from a majority-vote; which will be most disposed to believe in their own superior fitness to judge what is right and wrong, and determine the limits of any social claim they may allow to be binding upon themselves. Even at present, while a large majority of all classes are bound together by a common creed, and nearly all by common moral traditions derived from that creed, there is a strong tendency to despise those who are content to accept their moral standard from public opinion. When public opinion ceases to rest its moral code on any foundation stronger than a *plebiscite*, what code of social ethics can exert authority over independent minds such as at this day pride themselves on their indifference to opinion so long as they have the approval of their own consciences? Where will you find an authoritative rule of right; where a sanction to enforce it on the self-willed or self-reliant?"

"I think," answered Merton, "that you overlook the increasing closeness of the ties that bind society together. I do not of course speak of the personal relations between men of different ranks. Classes are more separate in their lives and feelings than they ever were, and I admit that this constitutes a serious social peril; a peril, however, which we need only consider, in regard to the

present question, in so far as different classes *tend to* accept a different ethical standard and law of action; and in this respect there is less difference than formerly. At the same time the complicated social machinery of civilization binds the entire community together in such a way that no man can say with reason and justice what many men of rank, wealth, and power might say of old, in the haughty phrase you quoted just now—‘what has society done for me that I should do anything’ for society?’ Each man’s whole existence, in every arrangement of daily life and in the habits by which life is ruled, not less than in the material comforts which constitute so large a part of civilization, is utterly dependent upon others. No civilized man could enjoy any one of the conditions which render life worth having save by the aid of some hundreds at least of his fellow-men. All that distinguishes him from the savage, his house, his fire, his clothes, his food, his books, he owes to the constitution—political, industrial, and general—of the community to which he belongs. He has, then, no right to set that community aside, disown all obligation to it, and disdain its laws. Again, you overlook the tendency of civilization, with all its complicated relations, to give weight and control to public opinion. The proudest and most independent of those who,—receiving from nature a strong and self-reliant intellect, and from fortune the blessings of wealth,—seem to themselves above and independent of their fellows, dare not defy opinion as a Viking or a robber-knight of the Rhine was wont to do, or as some English adventurers and native princes may do to this day in the East;—though, by the way, Eastern princes

are probably more fettered, at least on one side of their life, by traditional public opinion than the most constitutional of European sovereigns. Of course the introduction of any new ethical system will be very gradual, and education will have to be slowly adapted to it. The tendency of education in our age, and in those scientific ages which will we hope succeed it, will be to insist more and more on the closeness, the indestructible validity, the varied and irresistible demands, of the social bond. We may hope—those Positivists whom you treat as dreamers and as the most inconsistent of Materialists *do* hope—that a new religion not liable to be overthrown by scientific discovery can be founded on this principle—on the cohesion and mutual interdependence of all the individuals making up a community, small or great, and ultimately of humanity at large. Moreover we may trust that in the gradual formation and spread of such a religion the sway of the soundest, justest, best-balanced minds will constantly increase and extend; so that when the theological idea of duty has vanished from the minds of men, it will be replaced by a strong sense of those social duties, that interdependence of men on one another which, according to the soundest thinkers of the age, it was the first and most essential necessity of civilization to enforce; the enforcement of which, indeed, affords a rough measure during its earlier stages of civilization itself.”

“I have not overlooked those considerations,” said Cleveland, “though of course it was your business rather than mine to insist upon them. I might reply that you in your turn have forgotten the age in which you live. No doubt, as Mr. Bagehot has so well shown,

the first step of civilization was to weld wild and untamed men into organized communities; first as tribes, then as nations, latterly as empires. There was a time when the social bond was almost everything; when it was thought that the fault of the individual might endanger the entire community—as, for example, that the mutilation of the Hermæ by a single Athenian might bring down peril and punishment upon Athens as a State. In those days the individual was naturally and consistently expected to subordinate himself in every function of life to that State law which was at the same time a race-religion. But even twenty-four centuries ago the highest and best civilization was that which had most emancipated itself from this idea and given the largest scope to individual liberty and personal right. The superior attractiveness of Athenian life over the close, all-pervading military discipline of the Spartan Oligarchy—proved by the confessed happiness of Athenian life and the numerous examples that show how fiercely human nature reacted and rebelled against Spartan discipline when once a Spartan escaped from the immediate irresistible control and the inquisitorial vigilance of a system as inquisitorial and more unnatural than that of Venice—was commensurate with this extended personal liberty. The great moral movement, progress, revolution—call it what you will—of the last century, silently at work for centuries before, has had no effect more marked than its tendency to define more and more distinctly the frontiers within which individual liberty and social authority are respectively supreme, and to extend the boundaries of the former. You might as

soon hope to turn backward the current of the Amazon or of the Mississippi as to reverse the present tendency of individuality, domestic privacy, personal freedom, to extend and assert themselves against interference from without, and to narrow the authority, whether of law or of opinion, more and more exclusively within that region within which society is immediately and chiefly interested in action collective or individual—in which social interests are directly and visibly involved, and being so involved, can be fairly asserted to be of greater moment than those of the family or the single man.”

“I think,” said Sterne, “that I might on this point challenge your consistency. You admit, I believe, that the most certain unmistakable paramount characteristic of our age is the extension of democracy. And you think, though I do not, that democracy tends towards Communism. Again you affirm, and I am not prepared confidently to deny, that Communism involves such overruling of and interference with personal freedom and personal relations as the world, save in the case of Sparta, has scarcely seen. I presume also that you, in common with almost all the enemies of democracy, are struck by its tendency to control the individual conscience as well as personal liberty of action, to make public opinion, if only it be sufficiently general and permanent, the rule not merely of necessary public action but of right and wrong. In America, for example, very few men, however daring, however powerful by wealth and the influence which wealth used consistently for that purpose can give, venture avowedly and openly to defy the moral judgment of the multitude even in their private lives. They shrink from anything like

such display of luxury and splendour as is witnessed habitually among the wealthier classes of England; certainly they dare not defy public opinion in matters affecting the relations of sex, as too many Englishmen of fortune do. Moreover it seems to be generally agreed that few Americans, whatever their education, whatever their social tastes and habits, however long they may have lived as exiles by preference, can really shake off the belief that republicanism or democracy—involving at any rate absolute equality before the law, and the entire absence of hereditary rank and privilege—is the natural order of things; that monarchy and aristocracy are absurd in principle and doomed in fact. Now if this democratic temper be the most certain irresistibly growing and controlling tendency of the age, how can you say at the same time that the current of human thought and social habit has set so strongly in favour of personal independence and the limitation of social authority over the individual that it cannot be reversed or overruled?"

"You hardly," answered Cleveland, "put what I admit to be a fair challenge with the logical correctness and clearness I should have expected from you. Both tendencies exist; both characterize very strongly the so-called progress of civilization and the thought of this self-conceited nineteenth century. But whereas democracy has made comparatively little progress save in extent of dominion since Hellenic days, so that Massachusetts contrasts unfavourably in almost every quality on which Republicans of thoughtful and reasonable character would set much store with Athens in the time of Pericles, the assertion of personal liberty has grown and strengthened throughout the last two

thousand years. Its growth may have been now and then interrupted, more often concealed, by hostile influences. It is most powerful no doubt in this age under other than purely democratic governments, strongest in aristocratic England and semi-feudal Germany, weakest in the democratic societies of France and America. But it is still even in the latter more powerful than it ever was anywhere at any time since the destruction of the Roman despotism. It is, moreover, as I have said, the characteristic passion of the strongest tempers and the most powerful intellects, whereas democracy is the passion chiefly of the ignorant gregarious unthinking masses. Again, faith in personal rights and liberties within the scope of private life is perhaps the one faith so passionately held now-a-days by its votaries that they would suffer martyrdom rather than renounce it. Assume if you choose that democracy counts its adherents by millions where individualism can only claim scores or units: in calculating political and above all progressive forces you 'must weigh voices as well as count them;' you must consider not the numbers who adhere to an opinion but the tenacity and passion with which and the character of those by whom it is held. Now, in the first place, individualism, personal independence, is the passion of almost all the noblest minds among all the higher races, and on the average each man who asserts it in word and act outweighs in authority and intelligence ten thousand average democrats. In the second place, as I have just said, the intellectual aristocracy of this age and of every age, at least from the Reformation to the present hour, are and will for an indefinite period be in

ever-increasing proportion devoted to the maintenance in theory and in practice of absolute personal freedom in that part of life, ever larger and wider, in which personal interests are paramount, and yet more zealous for liberty of thought and its expression; and will face the gallows for their cause where the democracy would hardly face grape-shot and sabres."

"Even at the risk of being once more charged with claiming for Christianity what is due to other influences," interposed Vere, "I will venture to ask how much Christianity has contributed to this assertion of individual right, and independence of thought and life? In proportion as this individualism has been peremptory and powerful tenacious and persistent, it has been founded on religion. Men were willing to die for the rights of conscience long before they had realized any relation between the authority of conscience and the right of free-thought. The early Christians were the first among the subjects of the Roman empire who dared maintain at peril of life and limb that there existed duties paramount to the claims of the State, and rights with which Caesar himself could not and should not be allowed to interfere. I do not deny that there was a time when all the authority of the Church was employed against freedom of opinion. But those were the times when the Church had passed through ascendancy into corruption; and even then there was within the pale of the Church herself infinitely more diversity of thought and expression than is commonly supposed. The rivalry of different orders, of national ecclesiastical organizations, of distinct schools of casuistry, kept alive the tradition of personal independence



and responsibility, the free exercise of intellect—within limits wide enough as a rule for the aspirations and the knowledge of the age,—when these could hardly have found room in the rough conflict of physical force which was going on outside. If, again, the Reformation gave—as the comparative condition, moral and material, of Catholic and Protestant countries shows that it did give—a tremendous and hitherto unchecked impulse to individualism, and liberated the forces by which political and material progress is stimulated and facilitated, it was because, in the first instance, it revived the religious sense of individual responsibility, the rights and obligations of the individual conscience. True that each conflicting sect asserted—not the universal right of free private judgment, which was long regarded by all save the Quakers as a pestilent and dangerous heresy,—but simply its own right to hold its own, and if possible to destroy every other opinion. The practical effect of this conflict was nevertheless to enhance almost indefinitely the activity and independence of the human mind, first in the theological sphere, then in almost every other department of thought. Those Puritan bigots who were even more eager to hang and flog Quakers and Catholics than to assert their own right against the Church of England, whether in the pillory or on the battle-field, were, much against their own will, but by an inevitable sequence which even then acute intelligence might have foreseen, the parents of that modern nonconformity which asserts the liberty of the individual conscience as the highest of human rights; and even of that much more audacious free-thought which modern Noncon-

formists would very probably, had they full and unrestrained control of the civil and ecclesiastical power, repress with fire and sword."

"Yes," replied Merton, "I am not at all inclined to deny that humanity, even the humanity of the far future, owes, and always must owe, very much to men whose views were even narrower and lower than the conservative convictions of their time, but being contrary thereto, by their mere revolt shook those convictions, and opened way for the ideas which are now gaining ground and for those juster ideas which will ultimately prevail. Now, we may have hereafter teachers who will be to Comte what Comte was to Luther, or Luther to the Mediæval confessors who effected the conversion of the barbarian conquerors of Rome; or, again, what these very probably were to the Christians of the second century. Humanity no doubt will always owe a great debt to Jesus Christ as well as to Mahomet, to Zoroaster, to Moses. But it is always the fate of the later followers of every great teacher to turn his system against his principles, and to resist the progress of the present in the name of that which was high and noble progress in the past. It is not because we now discern the brightest hopes and some of the most distinctive principles on which Jesus Christ insisted to be mere dreams that we should therefore depreciate the service which he and the Apostles rendered to the cause of human advancement and civilization; or even that which the bigotry of their successors, much less intelligent for the most part than their heathen persecutors, also unconsciously rendered to the same cause. But neither should we at this day

allow any gratitude for those services or any respect for the dreams associated with them to delay the onward movement for which our age is prepared; or even doubt that we can now dispense with everything we see to have been fiction—however useful, however indispensable that fiction may once have been, when it gave force and life to the partial truth with which it was associated.”

“I can understand,” said Vere, “though I understand it with much pain, the tendency of men educated solely in material science, who assert the claims of physical demonstration as paramount if not exclusive in all the domain of thought whereon they do not forbid reason to enter, to regard as mere dreams the most valuable and the most cherished of the lessons of our Divine Master. What does somewhat surprise me is the tendency of these destructives, in the midst of their energetic negations of all in the faith of the past that does not admit of demonstration, to dream for themselves dreams much less glorious and certainly not more in accordance with their own rules and principles. The idea of a glorified future humanity has no real basis in history or in science, no better or more solid foundation than may be claimed for the spiritual glorification of humanity beyond the grave promised—I should say not only promised but proved—by the Author of our faith. Nay, grave scientific exception might be taken to the possibility of such progress as Positivism in its dreams or visions of the future aspires to realize on earth. Their aspirations are subject to the conditions of terrestrial life, conditions which are to a great extent fixed, and of which we know not a little ;

and I think that from a very few ascertained facts it would not be difficult to indicate a sure and not very distant limit to the development of human happiness on earth. Those extra-terrestrial dreams of which Positivism speaks so contemptuously were or are to be realized elsewhere under conditions of which we know and are told little or nothing. Science cannot afford anything that deserves to be called evidence that the Christian Heaven is impossible. I am strongly convinced, and I incline to think we might by careful and accurate investigation demonstrate, that the terrestrial Paradise of Materialism is literally and distinctly incapable of realization."

"And why?" said Merton.

"Because," replied Vere, "in the first instance, you cannot get rid of death or of the separation which death must always involve and which increases indefinitely in painfulness as men learn to suppose it final. You may say that when science has purified the human frame from the seeds of inherited weakness and disease death itself will seldom be a misfortune: that it will not come till life has ceased to be worth having. Considering the liability to death by horrible accident in the prime of life,—which as yet civilization has extended and rendered a more serious element in our prospects as it has subjected to human control forces of tremendous power which only the most careful and perfect vigilance can keep in check, and which, do what we will, are always apt at some unforeseen moment to rebel with terrific effect,—I think that even this statement might be challenged. But—admitting that as a general rule death will in your Paradise come only when it has ceased to

be really an evil, only to men and women who have gradually lost the power of enjoying life—death is an evil rather through the fear it inspires than through the pain it inflicts. The necessity of parting with life at some future time must always be regarded with horror and aversion so long as life is active within us. It must sadden and darken the brightness of youth and manhood, and sadden them more and more as men become more and more intelligent and thoughtful, and lose therefore that power of forgetting the necessity and certainty of death which at present they share so largely with all the brutes. It will not render this terrible certainty more agreeable, that death will be preceded by a gradual loss of all that is now pleasantest and dearest to us in life. The extreme brevity of human existence on earth must always render it unsatisfactory, must always embitter its sweetest pleasures, and hang as it were a sword over the head of the banqueter whose table Providence, fortune, chance, or human ingenuity has spread with the richest and the most various dainties that earth can afford. The man of twenty or thirty, with all the passion, the energy, the power of enjoyment, that belong to healthful youth fresh within him, can never be content to think that this cannot possibly last for fifty years and will assuredly be impaired within thirty. The keener and truer his thought, the less his power to forget what he knows on the most important of all subjects, the more terrible will appear this certain and speedy termination to his joys, this cruel brevity of life, intense in exact proportion to that enhancement of life's pleasures which you dream of effecting. Again, the limited space on the earth's surface, taken together

with the rapid power of multiplication possessed by man in common with other animals, must in a comparatively short time—especially should you realize your dreams of putting down war, pestilence, and even disease,—crowd every part of the world; perhaps not sufficiently to render food scarce or difficult to procure, but certainly too closely for the taste or comfort of men caring much for privacy. And however you may fancy that the development of the brain would diminish the multiplying power, so long as each generation exceeds the last in numbers—and this I presume it must always do—the date of that overcrowding which will involve actual want is but a question of time, and of no distant time. Again, while young and old live together and love each other—and assuredly did they cease to do so, half the brightness and worth of life would be taken away—the certainty and frequent experience of separations believed to be final must be sufficient of itself to darken the brightest homes with constant fear and frequent agony."

"Another point," said Cleveland, "deserves a passing notice. It is hardly conceivable that you can make life equally bright and pleasant for all, when you have cultivated all up to a point higher than that which the highest of us have yet reached. No refined cultivated family, keenly enjoying all the luxuries physical and mental that life can give, will be content to do for themselves all the domestic labour necessary to surround them with even as much of refinement and luxury as they now possess; and one of the least improbable elements of your dream is such an equalization of human conditions as shall render domestic service almost if not

quite unattainable. I might insist on this single point, that the happiness of life as now enjoyed by the rich and the refined depends, and must always depend, in large measure on the ministration of assistants less cultivated, or at all events less wealthy, and that an essential condition of your Paradise is that of such assistance there shall no longer be a supply. I believe that the present inequality of conditions is so compensated by difference of tastes and of refinement that—so long as sufficient food and clothing are secured and each person falls into that occupation or position for which inheritance and education have fitted him—enjoyment is distributed with tolerable fairness. The refined and sensitive no doubt get a far larger share of pleasure than those of lower and grosser organization, but at the same time they suffer far more pain. Taking not individuals but classes, and looking to their inward constitution as well as to their outward circumstances, I believe firmly that on the whole—want and the fear of want apart—rich and poor, masters and servants, are equally well off, and equally contented. I can therefore reconcile existing inequalities with my full belief in the goodness and justice of the Creator; at any rate more easily than I can reconcile with those qualities the vast inequalities in the scale of animal creation, infinitely greater than any that exists among men, and presenting this peculiarity, that the lowest organizations, those which enjoy least, are infinitely the more numerous; while half the more sensitive animal world passes its life in a condition of constant alarm or at least of constant vigilance, and is destined in a large majority of cases to serve as food to creatures little

superior in organization or capacity of enjoyment. But I see and confess distinctly that the Paradise of Positivism, while it may permit a difference of political rank, will allow no wide difference of fortune, and will probably in some centuries extinguish distinctions of hereditary sensitiveness and suitability to different station. Then I fear that to those who now enjoy life most keenly, who would feel that they were wasting their time and their powers in necessary but unpleasant tasks, the earth would be less agreeable than it is at present. I might add further objections to Vere's list; but I think it is enough to indicate the number of points at which a check, if not an insuperable barrier, is opposed to the indefinite improvement of human life upon this earth. You may render the existence of the millions better and brighter than it is now; you can never render a terrestrial life, without hope of anything beyond the grave, a real Paradise. You can in fact do little or nothing to create a happiness greater in kind or degree than that which is now enjoyed by those who combine the privileges of health, wealth, intellect and good spirits—that, for instance, of my own present life."

"Of course," answered Merton, "we must purchase any great amelioration in the condition of the poor by sacrifices, real or nominal, on the part of the rich. Any real improvement in the material, perhaps in the moral, condition of the Many means a rise direct or indirect, real as well as nominal, in the price of labour. I put aside for the present the question whether the commercial employers as a class would suffer greatly thereby, though I think nearly all economists are agreed that, cost of production remaining fixed, or rather being the



principal element in price, the public of purchasers and consumers will not in an age of competition submit to any increase in that margin of profit which pays the wages of labour, the interest of capital, and the expense of superintendence. So that, this margin remaining what it is or tending to become narrower, every addition to the labourer's share must be made at the expense of the capitalist, or of the adventurer who employs the capital if it be not his own. But certainly every rise in the real remuneration of labour must increase the cost of domestic service and so diminish the comfort of the rich. Your last objection therefore to our hopes is an objection to all improvement, an objection to hopes professed, if not in equal degree yet with equal distinctness, by Conservatives and Liberals alike."

"Scarcely," said Cleveland. "A very large proportion of the domestic service now employed by the educated classes could be dispensed with without wasting any portion of their time in domestic duties or seriously affecting their comfort. A change compelling them to dispense with this amount of service would merely improve the condition of the workers without exacting from the employer anything but greater simplicity of life. It is only when you come to something like real widespread equality, that domestic service becomes either unattainable or intolerably bad—as it is now in Australia and parts of America. It is only then that the welfare of the intellectual minority is seriously affected, or that society loses greatly, by obliging them to spend a considerable part of their time on functions in which their intelligence is wasted, and to which that of

inferior minds is better adapted. Your Paradise of equality would compel the community to pay for silver instruments, and use up one-fourth or one-third of their value in doing the work of iron, and probably doing it very badly. However, I do not suppose that Vere would care seriously to insist upon this part of his argument. His real point, and it is a very strong one, is that, whereas a spiritual Paradise is conceivable, the unalterable conditions of material life on earth render a terrestrial Paradise visibly and demonstrably impossible."

"I deny it," said Sterne. "If human creatures regard with horror the prospect of death, coming as an euthanasia at the end of a life enjoyed till enjoyment is no longer possible, it is through superstition and traditional habit. I do not wholly share the hopes of men like Merton, certainly I do not expect that they will be realized through that awful despotism of scientific intelligence on which Positivism rests its anticipations. But in justice to all of whatever sect who, limiting their hopes to this life, believe that this life can be greatly improved, you must remember that with religion we expect to get rid of a great variety of mischiefs connected therewith. We expect to educate, first, the civilized races, gradually the entire human family, to look at life from the beginning to the end in a purely reasonable point of view. So regarded, the fact that it is terminable and brief will be accepted with the calmness with which we always accept the inevitable and universal; and life, even for some fifty years of real activity and enjoyment, will be worth having, especially when its

termination is no longer surrounded with superstitious terrors; when men have ceased to expect serious physical pain and misery in parting with existence, and equally ceased to look for a future of uncongenial brilliancy on the one hand, or of intolerable horror and torment on the other. As matter of fact, we know that the great majority of men have always *practically* regarded death as the end of a state which they enjoy and to which they cling, rather than in the light in which theologians represent it, as a passage from one state to another. The Greeks, for example, looked forward, if they looked beyond the grave at all, to a Hades utterly devoid of anything they could prefer to annihilation; yet as a race they seem to have enjoyed this life intensely. They certainly did not feel that it was darkened and saddened, as you put it, by the impending sword of death, though with them death might be expected to occur at any moment. And when material science has done its best for mankind, death, save at the end of a life whose joys are thoroughly exhausted, will be so exceptional as scarcely to enter into human calculation."

"You forget, I fear," said Gerard, "one distinction between the joys of sceptical races in the past and your scientific thoughtful cultivated rational race of the future. In proportion as men are governed by instinct rather than by reason, they are able to cast off the burden of fear and even that of painful future certainties. If a people whose enjoyment of life depended chiefly on physical conditions—prominent among which were vigorous health a delightful climate and an inspiring atmosphere—were happy, it was because they

were able to forget—save in exceptional moments—the ultimate certainty and the constant probability of annihilation. There are men—I suspect a majority of men—who regard annihilation with intense horror, to whom the prospect of annihilation would darken the brightest hours of life if the thought were constantly or frequently present. In my youth I was myself one of these ; and, unable to satisfy myself that a future life was probable, I consulted one of the wisest and most 'experienced' of those among my elders who entertained views much resembling my own. The only practical counsel he could give me was—since nothing I could do or think out was likely to relieve my mind on the one hand, or to affect my actual future on the other—to forget death altogether. Such advice would, I think, be as useless to a Materialist trained by the education of the future, as it would be unworthy of a thoroughgoing Positivist teacher. When men are firmly convinced that within a given time they will be annihilated, while at the same time they regard annihilation with that intense horror which I think must attach to all keen enjoyment, and especially all keen intellectual enjoyment, of life, the thought cannot but be one of intense pain : and the very vividness of vital power, the zest of earthly pleasures will tend to remind them of it. Your highly cultured thoroughly rational Materialist will not be able to forget, and he will remember with unspeakable revulsion and reluctance, the certainty of a speedy termination of the life that is to be so pleasant."

"I doubt," said Sterne, "whether your argument, however sound it may appear, has much real value.

My own enquiries, and the experience of men who have studied the thought of others much more deeply than I, assures me that it is not by those who have keenly enjoyed life that death is most feared or a future existence most eagerly desired. On the contrary, it appears that in practice those who are most unwilling to part with existence are those who feel that they have not had their fair share in this world. To them, as Vauvenargues said, '*La mort comble l'adversité.*' When men of high intellect, gifted also with such advantages of fortune, health, and circumstances as have enabled them to drain to the dregs the sweetest cup of healthful pleasure that human life can present, reach an age at which the energy of youth has been lost and the work of manhood is completed, they accept the brevity of life or of existence as a natural and not unwelcome fact. They have had enough of it. It has given them all it can give, and they would hardly care to enjoy it over again."

"The first inference," said Vere, "that I should draw from such experiences would be that of the Preacher—'*Vanity of vanities.*' The cup which no one cares to drain again cannot have been very sweet, or must have been found poisonous; and even if your renovated and regenerated humanity could really make the most of this life and not wish to recommence it, it must be that life terrestrial without a future is not worth having."

"I," interposed Cleveland, "should put an entirely different interpretation on the experiences to which Sterne refers. It is precisely because the energy of youth is gone, because the capacity to enjoy keenly is exhausted, because in fact your examples are taken

from a class of men weary alike of work and pleasure, that they regard the promise of a future existence, and would regard even the renewal of this, as so slight a boon. Give them back for one hour the vigour and the keen susceptibility they once possessed, and they would be even more eager than youths who have not known what life can give, to perpetuate or renew it."

"Possibly," replied Merton. "But the mere fact that experience does destroy or greatly diminish all desire for renewed life would put down the terror of death among people educated to regard the whole question rationally and coolly."

"Not at all," answered Cleveland. "We all know that as matter of fact the dying seldom regard death with terror or even with reluctance. But this does not reconcile us while in health to the necessity of death. We are as anxious to keep our power of enjoying life as to retain life itself. As your experienced men cannot realize again the feelings with which they entered on life, and the zest with which they enjoyed it; so the young, whether of the present or of some infinitely improved generation, will not be able to realise the state of mind which regards annihilation with contentment; and the more delightful you render their life, the further into age you prolong its value, the deeper will be the shadow which the certainty of speedy annihilation must cast over it. Remember, as you have been so often reminded, that your training, whatever else it may do, will render men less and less capable of forgetting the primary fundamental facts and conditions of existence. Of these death is one of the most important; perhaps *the* most essential, since nothing

can affect more deeply the character of life than its duration. The more therefore you intensify, prolong, and extend the joy of existence, and the more successfully you train mankind to regard it thoughtfully and rationally, the more permanent, the more ever-present, and the more horrible will be the thought of its speedy and certain termination."

"I should wish again," said Vere, "to interpose one of those moral considerations to which Materialism is so averse. If this life be but a training for another, or for eternity; if even it be but a part of such training, its arrangement is consistent and intelligible. No really thoughtful and observant man can, as I think, carefully regard all he sees and knows of life from a moral standpoint without perceiving that from first to last it is a course of education and discipline. Materialism might explain the purpose of such discipline and training if it ended early in middle-life while the work, at least the most important and influential work, of manhood has yet to be done. It would then be such an education given by Providence or Nature, as we all strive to give to our children. But as matter of fact it goes on almost if not quite to the end. No part of it is more important or more impressive than that derived from the actual work of life, the experiences of mature manhood. Our Providential education certainly does not reach its culmination, to say nothing of its completion, till our children are grown up, and the best part of our life-work done. When our part is played out, we are in everything but energy stronger than in youth, wiser, fitter for the work even of this life; and, if only we have accepted instead of rebelling against Providen-

tial teaching, we are better in character and disposition than when at thirty or thereabouts we took our place among those by whom the actual work of the world was to be carried on. The discipline is a painful one; and if it is not to be utilized, the pain seems cruel and wanton. Yet methinks it cannot to any considerable extent be utilized here. It does not profit future generations to any degree commensurate with the care bestowed upon it or the suffering generally inflicted; for the young are and always will be partly unwilling, partly unable to assimilate the experience and the wisdom of age. It does not affect posterity through direct inheritance, because, as I have pointed out, the best part of our life-education has scarcely more than begun when our youngest children are born. It is, moreover, so intensely personal in its nature, so distinctly directed to cure our own faults, to complete and purify our individual characters, that we can hardly suppose it intended mainly for the benefit of others, even were it possible that they should largely profit thereby. Nothing, then, but a future existence can render the moral discipline of this life, in that personal aspect under which many of us feel compelled to regard it, consistent and reasonable in its general tendency; nothing else can furnish it with an adequate object. On the other hand the reasonableness, wisdom, consistency of its details are such as to render the idea that it is in general purposeless and aimless simply incredible to those who really appreciate its nature."

"I will grant," rejoined Sterne, "that Providence, and especially Providential relations with and training of individual men, are ideas not usually reconcilable with



disbelief in immortality. But you must remember that the Materialist recognises neither the one nor the other."

"Of course not," said Vere. "But my point is that, whether believing in Providence or not, whether Atheist or Christian, every thoughtful man, carefully noting his own experience and that of others, must recognise a moral training in life, even if he refuse or fail to discern either a teacher, or a purpose to which the moral training is to be applied. Now, if once the existence and persistence throughout our earthly life of such a moral training and discipline be recognised, it affords, in the first place, powerful evidence of Providential Government, and, in the next place, almost irresistible moral evidence of a future life; since its cohesion, consistency, and direct application to personal character forbid us as reasonable creatures to suppose that it is purposeless or simply wasted. Its character seems to indicate a personal direction: its value requires a future existence in which its lessons may be applied."

"I cannot say," replied Merton, "that I have ever recognised a moral training so distinct and definite, so persistent and prolonged, as to imply either a teacher or a personal object. But of course as a Materialist my attention has not been directed like yours to the evidences, real or fanciful, that a study of life from this ethical standpoint might furnish. I can, however, perfectly conceive a moral training of one generation for the benefit of the next applied by Nature to the elevation of the human race, in the same manner in which the principle of development has been applied to the animal creation; even though I fail as yet, even though collective science still fails, to see anything in

the one case like the sanction and enforcement which Natural Selection gives to development in the other. But I think we are wandering from our point, which was the dependence of practical morality upon theology. The higher forms of Materialism do, as you are well aware, claim at least to apply the principles of religion to the formation of habits which, as conducing to the general welfare of mankind, deserve to be called moral; and to give to these a sanction religious if not supernatural."

"Yes," said Cleveland. "Following your master Comte, whether you acknowledge him or not, you endeavour to steal from Theism or Christianity all its most attractive elements and all its strongest sanctions, none of which would ever have entered into the mind of a Materialist had Christianity or other forms of Theism never existed. The very fact that you steal them, or try to steal them, proves their enormous value. You yourselves, their bitter enemies, their declared despisers, are forced to confess their indispensable unequalled power by striving to borrow their influence, even while you repudiate their foundation and dilute their real meaning to a mere metaphorical shadow. You tell us of an immortality in which there is no trace of personal existence, no survival of consciousness, no share even by way of contemplation in the happiness for which we are to sacrifice our own, no reward whatever for the devotion of the present to a future whereof we can know nothing. You picture a heaven on earth which we shall not see, and which for us, to our consciousness, will never be realized; and you fancy that you can substitute this for a heaven

wherein we ourselves may have our place, and in which every duty faithfully done on earth will find not merely a distinct reward but that best of all personal 'rewards,' an elevation of our own nature which will help us to rise higher and higher through all Eternity. You forbid us to hope that we may witness the good things we have laboured to achieve for others; we must forego not only the gratification of seeing those we personally loved and lived for owing eternal happiness to the benefits of which God allowed us to be the instruments, but even the poorer colder satisfaction of knowing that remote generations *are* the better for our toils and sacrifices. You give us an object of worship and aspiration in a glorified perfected collective Humanity whereof we ourselves shall not even be members—which I again say will for us have no existence, since we can never know anything about it; and you expect that this metaphor, for it is no better, will do for future generations all that the direct conscious personal obedience and loyalty we owe to a personal perfectly wise and just Creator has done for us and for our forefathers. The mere fact that you chose to express anti-religious theories in language borrowed from religion, that your cleverest and most effective writers are those who most constantly and closely adapt their real thoughts to a language which for them is unreal and unnatural, proves what incalculable importance you yourselves in your own despite attach to the influences which in words you affirm to be worthless and impotent."

"No," rejoined Merton. "We accept all that is good and true in these influences, I might say all that is unselfish therein, and merely set aside a foundation

which as we believe has been created by human imagination to account for the existence of these influences."

"There is," interposed Gerard, "one element in the idea of immortality, generally overlooked, the utter disappearance of which from the heart would be a heavy loss to some natures, and these the most sensitive and sorely tried. I have known many whose character and temper has been spoilt, whose life has been utterly embittered, by a sense of injustice and ingratitude endured from the world—or worse, from those they most dearly loved therein. And such men have said that this injustice would be simply intolerable, might provoke them to lasting resentment and to renunciation of all ties and all duties, but for the hope, often very faint, of a fair trial before an impartial and infallible Judge. They wish that their conduct should be vindicated and their motives understood; perhaps, perplexed and harassed till their judgment fails them, they wish to be assured less of their innocence than of the truth, be that what it may. 'I expect,' one friend said to me, 'to be condemned: I am quite willing to accept my sentence, whatever it may be; but I do wish to have a fair and impartial hearing. To plead *here* would be mere waste of time, even if my pride could stoop to it. If I were finally and absolutely convinced that I should *never* be fairly judged, never cleared from the calumnies and misapprehensions that have ruined my life, I am afraid I should throw up the effort to do justice to others, and try to forget in distant regions and in personal indulgence the misery of which I am consciously undeserving. Failing in this, there remains always one certain cure; and to that cure men who have no religious misgiving

as to its legitimacy are with constantly increasing frequency enticed or driven.'"

"I repeat," said Cleveland, after a brief pause, "that immortality in the sense, or nonsense, wherein the word is used by Positivists and Materialists is a metaphor, not to say a fiction, of, which you would never have made use but for its associations with the idea of a real substantial personal existence beyond the grave: an idea which has for ages exercised a most powerful influence on the thought and action of mankind; but in which you have no right, on which you are lawless trespassers. I repeat that Humanity present or future is no real existence, but a name for a collection of human beings individually contemptible, and in no possible aspect worthy of reverence from us who are to ennoble and glorify it; a fantastic idea towards which worship is simply impossible and unmeaning. As to the selfishness you impute to Christianity, and to Theism in so far as Theism involves the belief in immortality, it is simply that element which gives to the Christian Heaven and the personal Deity that substantial reality (or realism) of which your metaphorical objects of hope and worship, your glorified Humanity and your terrestrial Paradise, are utterly devoid. Personal immortality is no less essential to those who are most perfectly free from a shadow of selfish motive. Suppose a man—and such men are conceivable at least, if not real—willing to forego his own share of Heaven for the sake of others. Still he would need immortality, or at least a future existence, in order to know that the object of his sacrifice was realized; that those he would never see again had

nevertheless attained that joy, that future progress, which he had purchased for them at so high a price. Similarly the personal Creator alone can command personal loyalty. We owe no allegiance to a posterity, however improved and however happy, so remote that we can scarcely feel interest in it; which has done nothing for us, and which in truth is to receive everything from us—is to be glorified by our own services, in order that we may worship not its reality but our anticipation thereof. Such miserable unreal empty imaginings of shapeless shadows do not acquire authority or influence because you attach to them names and attributes that have for those who believe in their proper meaning a supreme authority and an infinite value. But by confessing the necessity of some object of worship you acknowledge how deep, how all-important, is the actual influence of a belief in the Divine existence and personality over human action and character. By imagining a scientific Paradise on earth and borrowing for it all the epithets attached to a real Heaven, you do, unconsciously but most practically, confess how deep is the influence even on your own imaginations of that Heaven which you insist cannot, or ought not to, influence us."

"I might ask you, Cleveland," said Vere, "whether your own argument might not be turned against you; whether much of what you justly say in disparagement of Materialism and Positivism as compared with Theism might not be said in disparagement of Theism itself as compared with Christianity? Its Heaven is too uncertain both in its existence and its elements to influence any but the most vivid imagination. Your God is too

remote from humanity, His personality too indistinct and inconceivable to attract, save from a few exceptional natures, anything like the enthusiasm which almost any human creature can feel for a God Incarnate in a human frame, possessing human feelings, leading a life of sacrifice, and dying a death of torture for His fellow-men."

"I grant it," answered Cleveland. "The Materialists scarcely venture to conjecture at what time the theories of Comte may furnish a possible religion or effective morality for an improved posterity. Still less do I, not possessed by the intellectual arrogance and sectarian partisanship of Positivism, pretend to anticipate the time when all mankind shall be able to worship and obey an invisible Creator, and trust to Him for all the possible happiness of a Heaven, for all the punishments of a Hell not described by any Revelation. I will only remind you that Monotheism of a strong and even passionate temper existed for ages before Christ, and exists still in Islam; that the Jews from the time of David, certainly from that of the Maccabees, to the present, have been able to worship an invisible Jehovah, and have been satisfied with the hopes of pure Theism, as regards anything beyond the very vague rewards and punishments promised in the Old Testament, and nowhere therein definitely located beyond the grave. But Christianity no doubt will last till its work is done; in the meantime I repeat what I said not long ago, when most of you were present: that I should shrink, in the present state of human thought, from doing anything to weaken its influence. There is, and always will remain this distinction between Theism and Positivism,

that belief in a real God [generally in a true Heaven and Hell] does control through its own influences, unindebted to any other creed, the lives of thousands; whereas not a single Positivist, and scarcely any Secularist, however practical and limited his belief, can find comfort, solace, or control therein without borrowing not only his moral code but all its sanctions and all its energies either from Theism or from Christianity. There are thousands who like myself recognise simply and absolutely the indefeasible claim of Supreme Wisdom to our unqualified obedience and unhesitating trust. Confident that they can never have cause to doubt the judgment or object to the purposes of our Commander-in-chief, men the sadness and darkness of whose lives painfully contrasts my own are content to fight and to suffer, enduring to the end; abiding—under no matter what temptations to desertion or mutiny—at the post in which He has placed them, however intolerable its conditions, however perplexing or seeming impracticable its duties; asking only light to perform them—not even, like Ajax, light wherein to die. We are content, if, in good or evil, we can read enough for our own guidance, though nine-tenths of the orders be written in a language of which we are ignorant, or, still worse, in a language which simply perplexes us. It would be enough for the most sorely-tried of these my comrades if, though knowing nothing of the pay or punishment we may receive hereafter, though often unable to understand those we receive here, we only knew that there is a Future where our Commander will—as He alone can—do perfect justice at last. The utmost we could think ourselves entitled to ask is



simply an assurance that we shall be permitted to report ourselves at the last Court-Martial, and there to learn how far we have done our duty; refusing absolutely and always to admit the authority of any other tribunal over our consciences and our conduct, and satisfied with whatever sentence we may there receive; as little disposed to canvass its probable nature as to discuss the reasons that have governed the dispositions on which our own particular place in this world depends, and of which we can see no more than a single sentinel of lines extending over half a province. Gerard was right in saying that this assurance of final justice, of a final acceptance or rejection by Supreme Wisdom, is the need most deeply felt by those who are conscious, with Rabbi Ben Ezra, that

‘This world hath been harsh and strange;  
Something is wrong; there needeth a change,’

yet do not on that account desire to remit their vigilance or renounce their allegiance. It is for those whose life is not merely unhappy but unfair—who are conscious of good service unrecognized, of errors natural and perhaps inevitable in a hard position cruelly punished, of honour stained unjustly, perhaps of self-respect wounded and crushed—that the thought of a life where *all* the secrets of the heart are known is a thought of almost unalloyed hope and comfort: and what these would do without it, men to whom, as to myself, this world is gracious and this life rich in enjoyment and full of peace, can hardly imagine. But this at any-rate we all can see and feel; that after religion, the influence that does most to hold us to duty and

strengthen us against temptation is that of human and especially of domestic love. But—if affection have no future and its loss no solace, if every death-bed parting be final, must not that love speedily wither in the bitter frost of an universal conviction that in cool selfishness and profound indifference alone can we find defensive armour against ever-threatening peril, or anæsthetic against intolerable pain? What, in a world governed by such a conviction, will be the doom of the weak—of women and of children? What bonds will hold society together, and distinguish the life of men from that of wolves?”

There was a pause—neither Sterne nor Merton cared to answer such a question, asked by one whose well-known doubts gave it a sad and serious significance. At last Vere rose to depart, and rising, said:

“Extremes meet, Cleveland; and profound scepticism bears witness to the truth of Faith’s deepest lessons. Doubt and even disbelief bring you, and those who have learnt them in a harder school than yours, back to the point from which Christianity took its departure—an intense, immovable conviction of the worthlessness of a present that knows no future. The happiest sceptic I ever knew finds a life ending in the grave scarcely better than it seems to the saddest; the sunniest side of human experience reflects the lore learnt in its darkest shadows. ‘Vanity of vanities’ is the summary of an earthly existence which has been as full of honourable service as of innocent enjoyment: you who have tasted and relished all that is best in life material and intellectual, no less than he who has

drained the cup of sorrow and suffering to the dregs, can only re-echo the testimony of the arch-Apostle, 'What advantageth it us, if the dead rise not? . . . : Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.'"

THE END.









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